WHAT OUGHT I TO BELIEVE

J. A. W. HAAS

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Bonebrake Seminary

What Ought I to Believe

A MORAL TEST

By

JOHN A. W. HAAS

President of Muhlenberg College

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PREFACE

It is a common opinion that our beliefs do not influence our morals. Many people live better lives than their faith warrants, and many live below the possibilities of their beliefs. Our morals are often influenced by ideals we do not accept. Past beliefs have been inherited and act upon us in the making of our characters. Consequently men disregarding these facts separate faith and life.

But when our beliefs are what they ought to be, they have the power of living convictions. These convictions cannot remain purely religious but have ethical character. In fact no beliefs will finally live that do not possess the highest moral value and promise. To justify our beliefs we must inquire into their ethical outcome. If we can show that the moral result is the best on the foundation of certain truths of faith, we incur the obligation to hold these truths. When we turn to the personal application of the obligation of beliefs with the best ethical consequences, we must ask, *What ought I to believe?*

This little book attempts the effort to demonstrate that the ruling presuppositions and beliefs of evangelical faith have the moral worth that obligates us to give them their right in our lives.

J. A. W. H.

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INTRODUCTION

At first sight it seems a very strange and misplaced question to ask, "What ought I to believe?" The sphere of "ought" is distinctively that of morals. Duty is one of the fundamental ideas of ethics. The requirements and meaning of obligation, connected as it is with responsibility, demand the consideration of the human will both in attitude and action. But belief belongs to the life of religion. Beliefs are attitudes of acceptance of the supernatural and divine.

It is specifically with religious beliefs that we are about to deal, and not with every kind of relation of our mind to what we hold to be true. How can any moral demand be attached to that which is essentially religious? Religion has to do with man's inner mystical life. It is not in its origin, will, and action, but acceptance and meditation. Whatever life it has and shows does not develop out of an ideal as a command, but from great truth lovingly received. In religion we accept, in morals we act.

If many modern thinkers were consulted they would frame the question in an entirely different way. Their query would be: "What can I believe?" In this age of scientific approach to knowledge the intellectual group thinks that we must limit beliefs in religion as much as possible. Some there are who hold that they can believe virtually nothing outside of what is considered demonstrable by the logic of scientific research. But not all of the intelligentsia go as

far as this limitation. Nevertheless they cannot accept many religious truths formerly the common treasure of men. Some beliefs are retained and others rejected. Frequently there is no consistent relation between the accepted and rejected elements of faith. All those who have set aside religious beliefs will utterly object to the claim that there is a moral obligation not only to believe but also to accept certain essential religious truths which Christianty presents.

But in present-day philosophic thinking there is a tendency to deny the right of the intellect in its scientific quest as determining the problem of faith in religion. It was William James who coined the phrase: "The will to believe." While the idea can be traced back to Kant, it only became common property through the pregnant formulation of William James. The contention of James, and those who follow him, is, that we can take our choice and believe. It is possible to go forth on the adventure of faith. As we freely take risks in our life we can take the risk of believing. The question is not one of logic but of the demand of life. Eleanor Rowland has called this will more than a mere attitude of action. She argues for the right to believe. It is her claim that faith is one of the real and necessary human rights. But none of the contenders for the will to believe are ready to make faith a moral obligation. Men may believe if they will, but they ought not as normal beings feel the duty and accept the obligation of faith as an attitude toward truth.

But there is a claim in vital faith and in living beliefs which modern thinking fails to recognize properly. The great religious facts in the Christian faith with its beliefs are all ethical as well as religious. The two cannot be separated in their demand and appeal to us. We must not believe them if we do not will to do so, for there can be

no coercion in faith. What we believe we ought to believe freely and from an inner conviction. Nevertheless the beliefs that best satisfy the ethical ideal do come with a special claim. We ought to believe, not simply what we have received through our birth, our family and church connection, but that faith should rule our minds and hearts which can develop the noblest and best moral life in us.

What Ought I to Believe

CHAPTER I

The Moral Demand Upon Belief

What is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad, are very fundamental human questions. How far do these moral judgments reach, and what is the extent of their demand upon human thought and action? While some conceptions, habits and deeds are under certain conditions morally indifferent, the major portion of our life must be estimated ethically. Our problem is whether moral ideals and claims can make a demand upon religious belief. It may seem that the truths of our beliefs are mystical or metaphysical and not inherently and essentially moral. The nature of God has often been made a metaphysical problem. The doctrine of the angels has apparently no ethical quality. The incarnation of the Son of God is speculative as it is treated in many books on Christian doctrine. The unmerited effect of the sacraments according to some Christians is mystical. The outlook upon the end of time is mystic speculation. What claim therefore have moral judgments upon such and like beliefs?

But the question is not settled through these apparent objections. If we consider the beliefs just enumerated they

will be seen to contain moral implications. It is of importance whether they measure up to a true ethical standard. Whatever we think God to be we must determine if He is good, just, and merciful. We cannot evade the moral test as applied to our idea of God. The doctrine of the angels which seems so far removed from any moral claim, is nevertheless connected with the belief in divine guidance, protection and providence. And the problem of our life as dependent on or independent of God's care, and that of His ministering servants, impinges upon our self-determination and responsibility in life. Thus we come at once upon a moral consideration.

The incarnation cannot be limited to the mere discussion of the relation of the divine to the human. We must ask what is its purpose? The actual life of Jesus with its moral perfection must be considered, and thus the incarnation will naturally lead to ethical demands. In whatever way we interpret the sacraments they cannot finally be conceived of without asking what is the demand and the resultant of their use upon human character? The end of the world and time are always bound up with the last judgment, and this final separation of good and evil does not rest upon mere religious tests but upon a truly honest, moral life of love.

In the same manner it will appear, as we consider our outstanding beliefs, that they must be adjusted to fundamental moral claims. All our beliefs in one way or another have to do with our happiness or misery. The question of a happy or unhappy life is not in its essence an emotional or sentimental interest. It is an ethical problem. No one who has endeavored to discuss the secret of a happy life has been able to eliminate the moral considerations. Our whole destiny with which religion is concerned is not a

mere fate, but it appeals to our sense of responsibility and our conception of right. The truths that are connected with all that God is and means, the doctrines of and about the Christ, are never religious without being at the same time ethical. Our sin and unrighteousness, our salvation and redemption, our regeneration and conversion, cannot be adequately treated except from the moral angle. The atonement becomes a metaphysical process without the moral element. The Church cannot be a communion of saints without the character of saintliness, and this is moral as well as religious.

The necessity of the moral test in religious beliefs is well demonstrated in most non-Christian faiths. They do not possess the close connection of the religious and moral that we find in Christianity. The fundamental character of the Christian faith when rightly apprehended is always ethico-religious. In most early religions of the lower type there is considerable nature worship. This carries with it the amoral quality of religious naturalism. But the amoral soon becomes the immoral. The productive forces of nature are deified and through this deification men are made impure. In nature itself reproduction is not impure, but when man imitates nature without moral limitation and control, he sinks below the human level.

The primitive religions despite some good traits fail man and degrade him just because they lack the moral quality. In higher forms of religion, like the Greek and Roman, the effort to humanize the gods did not free these religions from the taint of naturalism. Consequently reflective and philosophical ethics destroyed the beliefs in the gods and their many immoral deeds. They could not be measured by fair moral standards. The great Eastern faiths, like Hinduism and Buddhism, with their denial of the right of

all desire, seek to destroy individual life in order to save it. They are ascetic to the limit. Thus they cannot truly moralize the actual human life. The fatalism of Mohammedanism takes away the sense of justice in the dealing of Allah with man. Early Judaism is too nationalistic to be of service to all men through its notion of God. He is often extremely arbitrary in power. Thus we find wherever we look that religion fails to the degree that it does not answer the moral demand.

In the Christian faith the true approach to beliefs is not that of a series of tenets. It may create systems of doctrine but it is finally not the inner logical consistency of a system that justifies its beliefs. In fact the effort at apparently non-contradictory truths skillfully combined is often a hindrance rather than a help to faith. Faith is liable to lose itself in intellectualism. Again and again in the history of the Church intellectualism has dominated, and conclusions and consequences were drawn mercilessly. But the extremity of the logical procedure has always in the end killed religious life, and brought about a reaction toward vital piety. These reactions were often advanced because of the immoralities that accompanied the most highly developed intellectualism whether of doubting rationalism or of strict orthodoxism. The moral demand cannot be met through any system as system, correct as it might be. Beliefs must rest upon more than intellectual assertions of truth. How can this difficulty be met? Has emotionalism solved it? High emotionalism and even lesser sentimental emotionalism have frequently not moralized men. The moralization of men must begin through the will and the appeal of religious truth to the conscience.

Christianity does not however rest its case upon the abstract discussion of intellect, emotion or will. It derives its beliefs

from faith, and it does not arrive at its faith from its doctrines. Faith in its original sense is trust in a personality. In its essence it is a moral relation of personality with personality. Since the personality that conditions the Christian faith is that of the sinless Christ it has a perfect moral basis. Out of this foundation of the living Christ the beliefs must grow, and to the degree that they are derived from the Christ in His fulness, as personality of life and truth, they are genuinely ethical. We must trace the Christian beliefs out of the teaching and life of Jesus, and those who are His first and immediate interpreters. In this way we shall be able to impress men in their consciences that they ought to believe, because of the moral claim in the religion of the Christ.

CHAPTER II

The Supernatural World

The fundamental presupposition of all religions is the existence of a supernatural world beside the present natural world. Without such a belief religion could not have any hold upon men. And therefore Christianity is shot through with the conceptions of the supernatural. But can this supernatural world, as accepted and believed in, answer the moral demand? The reality of that which is beyond the natural does not appear to offer the realm for moral motive, judgment and decision. The ethical life must be lived in the world here and now. Its ideas and actions touch the immediate world of body and mind. As man rubs elbows against man he must act in accord with some standard of the good. What is needed is the apprehension of the obligations and duties of the present, and the practise of the best possible code of human conduct. It is well to analyze the morality of the world as it is about us and comes to us. Then we can determine whether it is adequate or not.

A great part of our life and knowledge comes to us through our senses. The waves of light fall upon our eyes and bring us sights and colors. Our ears receive the sounds within the limit of their capacity. Smells and tastes are other avenues of approach to our mind. Through this world without and about us we see and hear men. We take them by the hand and they enter into our consciousness through the realm of touch. Our inner world of feelings, emotions,

sentiments, leading to action, rely upon the entrance of the experiences from without. Our thoughts arise from the contacts of the outer world. Ideals come into being through the concrete life without and about us. It is in this actual life and through its content that we must act. Our problems of right and wrong call for a decision in this milieu of the present and not in some ideal, far-off scheme of existences. The formal abstractions of ideals, duties and virtues are derived from this constantly changing and shifting world of experience. It is in this world that men live and carry on their occupations, seek their enjoyments, and find their satisfactions.

And yet if we admit and realize to the full this immediate life of a thousand and one things and of many human contacts with all its vital richness, we must ask if it really can give us the highest and best moral ideals and purposes. All the advocates of an ethic confined to the sphere of the present concrete world can find no higher aim of human life than pleasure. Their standard is simply that of a happiness in terms of sensation and feeling. Reason plays a very minor part. But can the best moral life be attained on this basis? Must we not reach beyond this natural world?

In answer to this query, and growing out of the unsatisfying character of an ethic of feeling and sense, the idealists have pointed us to the supremacy of reason. In it they seek to find the highest moral aim. But the cold intellect loses the fulness of the actual life. It is searching after a larger and better world but it cannot find it in its stern demands of duty and of restraint. The categorical imperative has no content. Reason is on the way but it cannot furnish the living idealism to satisfy heart and mind. It looks to a world it cannot enter. Where then can we find the highest motive for morality? Must we try after all to obtain it

through the belief in a supernatural world which so many intellectuals have so quickly rejected?

If we inquire what philosophy lies back of the morality of this mere present life, with its accent on pure this-worldliness, we shall find that it is naturalism. Can naturalism legitimately carried to its conclusions furnish any basis for ethics? If we live in the world of sense and feeling, of emotion and sentiment, we are constrained to admit that our life is physical. Its problems are therefore physiological. Our decisions and actions are subject to the sequences of natural cause and effect. Our body has our mind, and we are a complex of physical, chemical and biological functionings. On this view we are not really free in our decisions, and obligation, responsibility and duty are in reality a delusion. The naturalism of the sense life cuts at the root of all morality.

But perhaps we are better off if ethics are the servant of reason. Finally, however, if reason be only the reflective capacity of man it must defend its origin. When it seeks this apart from supernaturalism it must go to a world-reason. All philosophies of the universe as reason or law include man within universal reason. He becomes part and parcel of the law of the universe. Thus again his freedom is not guaranteed. This universalism of reason to which any morality of mere intellect must eventually lead is only a naturalism of another degree. There is no real difference of kind. We have thus arrived at an impasse. Should we endeavor to stress the human will it will be reduced by the same naturalism to a part of universal energy or force. Our analysis showing us how naturalism cannot meet the moral claim forces us beyond it to inquire into the possibilities of supernaturalism.

The supernatural world must be more closely defined. So

many claims are made in its behalf that need testing. Ignorance and superstition hide under its cloak. There is a genuine and a spurious supernaturalism. The spurious supernaturalism is largely magic. In magic there are three elements. First, it pretends to overcome the natural life and to contradict the clear evidence of sense. Second, it devises formulas and charms through which it operates upon man. In these words and actions that it uses there dwells, according to its belief, a special supernatural power. Third, it claims to summon supernatural energy for the benefit of the individual, and mostly to cure him of some bodily ill or to bring some external good fortune. Not all magic contains all of these elements equally, for often one or another feature predominates. Magic has often lived on along with true and genuine supernaturalism. Many modern cults are magical and appeal to the superstitious in man. The most marked example of the magic that contradicts immediate sense is the belief that in the Lord's Supper there is a transmutation of bread and wine, so that they no longer exist as such. Their substance is supposed to be changed and yet the qualities of the original bread and wine remain. There can be no real morality constructed upon magic. Any attempt to do so defeats itself. If the claim is made, the morals from another source are illegitimately attached to magic.

What magic sought and failed in is found in mystery. Mystery rightly conceived is simply an experience beyond the world of sense. It does not deny nor contradict the external, material world. Its purpose is not bodily but spiritual, and it belongs to the invisible realm of spirit. We do not as yet know its laws and operations because we have not sufficiently explored the world of the spiritual. Per-

haps we shall never be able to fathom the secrets of the essentially spiritual and supernatural.

It is in the sphere of mystery that we find miracles. The usual method of classing all miracles, true and false, under the head of magic is not just. It is an assumption to say that miracles are contradictions of the ascertained laws of nature, and that, therefore, they are impossible. In our present state of knowledge they seem to be exceptions not yet solved. It may be that they belong to a higher and not yet discovered realm of the world of mystery. But genuine miracles are signs and not wonders. Their direction is not selfish gratification but altruistic service. They teach something about the spiritual and its power. No short cut for belief is to be found in them, but they are to aid in the spiritual apprehension. No idle curiosity is to be satisfied through them. The natural order is not disrupted nor set aside by them. Man's struggle and his efforts are not destroyed by real miracles. He does not continue to live in a miraculous world. From them there comes no moral disturbance, for in their genuine form they lead to moral development. Wherever this element is lacking, and wherever they are not attached to spiritual truth otherwise sustained, they are spurious. It is the spiritual and moral truth in itself that gives credence to miracles, and it is not the mystery of the miracle that establishes any truth.

But we must show more direct service to morals in supernaturalism than is found in mystery and miracle. The first direct approach of man to the supernatural world is through worship. It may seem that worship has nothing to do with morals. It may become moral or immoral in its use, but apparently it is amoral. This first judgment is, however, a mistaken one. True worship implies the act of a free man seeking God. Hocking well says: "Worship may be

described as the deliberate effort to restore or increase freedom by renewing the relation of the self to its ultimate hope."* When man worships he seeks contact with the source of his being. He cannot in real worship but obtain impetus toward a better life. If he prays in private he may become selfish and turn worship into magic, seeking only some material benefit. But magical prayer is not genuine worship. In true prayer man is morally stimulated by his thought of God and of other men. He is freed for the moment from the limits and restrictions of space and time. The evils and temptations are pushed back. There flow into his life streams of new power and influence for good. Common worship is equally a moral tonic for the sense of real fellowship, mutual forbearance, and love. It must avoid the formalism that will make it magical. The form of words whether in set liturgies or free prayers dare not be used as charms or incantations. But whatever the methods of worship in words or in song, if they are pure and genuine they lead through the spiritual reaching out after the supernatural into attitude in which man's character renews itself, and returns to the world of action with new ideals and new vigor for a nobler and purer life. Worship always renders a moral service unless it becomes mechanical and stereotype.

From worship we are naturally led to the object of worship. All depends upon whom men worship. If praise and prayer are directed to gods symbolizing forces of nature there can be no moral uplift. A fetich or a totem, an idol or a statue, contain no ethical ideal in what they represent. Among many low tribes there existed devil-worship. Evil was worshiped from fear and the worshiper was degraded. A non-moral god or the universe are not

* *The Self, Its Body and Freedom*, p. 169.

calculated to give motive and impulse to a moral life. But where man adores and seeks God, who embodies every ideal and virtue, he finds himself constantly in the presence of moral perfection that must affect his whole thought and deed. Man becomes like the God whom he worships. The nature of the God of a people indicates the ethical standard of that people. Men are constantly being made into the image of the God they have before their vision. The place and character assigned to God in His supernatural being elevate men beyond any other power and influence. The supernatural world comes to man and shapes him into high moral excellence through God.

It is very important whether man estimates himself merely as a natural being or as one with a soul. The present psychology lives upon the surface in its observations of the mind of man. It tries to make him objective and reduce him to a complex of biological behavior. Only attitudes, adaptations, complexes, brain waves, and like phenomena are studied. Glands and their secretions are analyzed in an effort to explain normality or abnormality. The mind as a unity has been lost, and the soul has been abandoned. If this be the whole and true man then there is no room for any ethical theory. It becomes a mere description of human nature in terms of naturalism.

But there is a religious estimate and valuation of man as soul and spirit. According to this man cannot be only an animal. Whatever his connection with earth man in religious belief has within him a divine spark. In such a valuation man receives a worth that makes every thought, motive, feeling, emotion and sentiment subject to another consideration than the natural. If we are children of God in spirit then our character and action must be measured by moral ideals and norms far above any speculative effort

of a natural morality, relative to custom, habit, and the changing conceptions of society. The supernatural that dwells in us makes our ideals, our duties and virtues conformable to the divine. We cannot be satisfied with the acceptance of regnant human conceptions of what is right or wrong. The defects of the average morality will be overcome, and we shall not live down to the usual practise of men, or fall below it, but strive to live upward from the best in temporary moral practise. The reason why there is in most lives and in the social forms of today so little marked moral progress is the neglect of the supernatural valuation of man. We rise and fall in our ethical advance in a crooked curve because we do not follow the divine trajectory. There can be no doubt of the tremendous importance of the supernatural in stimulating and directing moral progress.

We cannot be indifferent to our destiny. If it be only temporal our whole scheme and plan of life will be conditioned by temporal advantage and disadvantage. Our moral tasks will be relative to the demands of men. Good and evil can have only a passing importance. Right and wrong can be bent to the exigencies of the temporal order with its shifting standards. There are men and women of our times who assert that they have no desire for immortality. They are willing after the years of their earthly existence to cease being, or at the best to be absorbed into some universal existence. Their idea is that with the dissolution of their bodies the self is broken up, and with the decay of their bodies it no longer lives. In this view our whole future destiny is to be materially transmuted into the chemical elements of which our body is composed. Then our object must be to eat and drink for tomorrow we die. We will take life as the bird that is on the wing. Our

purpose is then to take the cash and let the credit go.

But if in contradiction to this opinion of our destiny we take it to be true that we have an eternal goal, how differently we shall shape our lives. It is not a fact that other-worldliness unfits us for this world and the present life. There may be dreamers and ascetics that misapply the meaning of immortality, but sound common sense uses the supernatural and eternal destiny of man to make this life better. Our duties and responsibilities are assumed in the light of eternity. What we think and do, how we conduct ourselves toward our fellow men, and how we relate ourselves to God, become paramount considerations. If we are destined for immortality it follows that others have the same hope. How much higher will be our value of others and our relation to them, if we regard them not simply as other members of the human species, or as other personalities, but as other souls with the ultimate hope before them. The whole foundation of our ethics and its practise will take on a nobler aspect. It is very clear, therefore, that the acceptance of the supernatural world, with God, the soul, and immortality as its center, far from being of no account in the moral life, creates a superior character never reached by any kind of naturalism.

CHAPTER III

The Authority of Faith

A fundamental claim of our beliefs that we derive from our faith is that of authority. We want to be sure of our beliefs and to possess an assurance of faith. Religion cannot exist without authority. It cannot have a shifting and relative authority. There must be lasting certainty that does not change with every wind of human doctrine. Everywhere the heart asks for an infallible faith infallibly guaranteed. With this conception of the infallible authority of religion ethics does not seem to agree. It lies in the very nature of freedom, responsible for its choices and results, to oppose an authority which from the very start demands submissive obedience, and does not apparently admit of deliberative consideration, balancing judgment, and self-determining decision. How can we accept ideals imposed upon us, duties not freely acknowledged, and virtues demanded and not shaped by our own decisions? We want to make even our good habits, and do not want them made for us. There seems an inescapable conflict, therefore, between an infallibly authoritative religion and a vital morality of liberty.

Some men seek to escape from this dilemma by rejecting an authoritative religion, and by seeking the remedy of reason. But when reason begins to operate upon religion there are two possible outcomes. The human intellect may analyze, and criticize, until it dissolves all religion into doubt. Rea-

son has a critical and skeptical direction that dissolves instead of constructing. Any construction that it makes can again be destroyed by some other critic. The intellect is restless and cannot give the peace and rest which the heart seeks for in religion. Reason can only propose conflicting philosophies, and constantly lead us around the circle as the history of philosophy shows.

The alternative to a complete surrender to reason is to allow it partial right. Where men accept this position they cannot explain their inconsistencies and contradictions. Why is some religious truth accepted and other religious truth rejected? Authority rules in part and the intellect rules in part. There is no adequate explanation for this combination. Consistency should demand the one or the other. But since most men never think through their problems we find many, even in prominent pulpits, who cling to some of the past traditions while rejecting others. They apply modern scientific results to some degree but not fully, and they equally bow to some authority and can give no real reason why they do so. If we throw aside all authority we must do so fully, and trust ourselves to the uncertainties of human speculation. Is this the way out of the difficulty? Is this the moral solution of freedom? If so we shall have a very relative and unsure religion, and a very uncertain morality. Against such an eventuality our deepest feelings revolt.

Another proposed solution is to accept religion with all that it implies as a law. A law must be obeyed. It is not for man to reason why, or to protest the right of his liberty. The law exacts obedience, and knows no exception. If religion consists of demands that have divine and infallible authority we have no right to rebel. We must do what is commanded, or suffer for our transgression. This severe Puritanic conception of religion and morals is very well for

the age of childhood and innocence, although it has in part failed there also.

Laws, even though they come with a divine claim, cannot be imposed upon man without causing his resistance. No one passed through this experience more thoroughly than St. Paul. He found that by the law there is no righteousness. Man revolts, and does what the law forbids.* No religious or moral life is built up by suppressive demands of laws. Our American life shows this fact abundantly. We are always trying to cure evils by law, and we increase laws that are not kept. But we cannot salve our conscience in this procedure. Laws that are not freely accepted as ideals are not kept. Enforced authority fails and only creates lawlessness. Children that have been brought up under the regime of religious commands and moral enforcements turn away in later life from all religious authority. Puritanism has and is creating in our land an increasing lawlessness by the manner in which it imposes upon unconvinced and unwilling people laws that it backs up with religious authority. There can be no reconciliation between authority in religion and real ethical life through legalism.

When legalism makes its full demands it asks for the surrender of an independent conscience. At times it is supported by custom and tradition, and at times by definite religious claims. The right to liberty of opinion and thought is practically denied in certain communities and sections of our land. Strong prejudice enforces upon all who do not want to be socially outlawed the prevailing views. All moral freedom is set aside and the authority of an intolerant legalism makes moral progress impossible.

Strong restrictions obtain in the Roman Catholic Church. Any one who is a member of the Roman Catholic Church

* Romans 7: 7ff.

is asked to put conscience into the keeping of the dogma of the Church. In many questions both religious and moral there cannot be legitimately any private judgment. Moral independence and the unrestrained freedom of the conscience is forbidden. Such authority when accepted is the surrender of the ethical right and responsibility of the individual. The theoretical claim of the Roman Church extends beyond the individual to forms of society as the family and the state.*

The problem of the authority of religion in Christianity as related to morals cannot evade the discussion of infallibility of authority. In the Roman Church there is a very definite dogma of the infallibility of the Pope. This is not a personal but an official claim. When the Pope speaks ex cathedra in matters of faith and life he utters the truth of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit makes the Pontiff the visible representative of the unerring Christ. Since both the Bible and ecclesiastical tradition, as well as the actions of the great councils of the Church, need clarification and interpretation they find it in the infallible voice of the Pope speaking as the mouthpiece of Christ. Problems that arise in succeeding generations and in the course of centuries are also settled by infallible decrees. Modern aberrations and new conceptions that conflict with the established dogma are declared heretical. This compelling power of infallibility has condemned much modern thought and hindered ethical progress through its legally sanctioned mediaevalism. It is utterly incompatible with any real moral liberty. The fallible judgments of man are ruled out by an authority that claims the impossibility of error.

But it is not the Roman Church alone that has a doctrine of infallibility. The early position of Protestant doctrine put an infallible Bible over against an infallible organization.

* Haas, *The Problem of the Christian State*, chapts. 5ff

It is supposed that the original manuscripts of the books of the Bible were without error in every detail. No one ever saw or can prove such an infallible set of books, but their existence is made an article of faith. Actually Christians have always had a Bible that contains many variant readings due to the differences in the old manuscripts.

In addition no matter how perfect the Bible might be, it is subject among Protestants to the differing interpretations of churches and individuals. The right of private judgment in matters of faith does not permit any demand of infallible interpretation. While there is reliance upon what is called the testimony of the Spirit, who guides men into the truth in the search of the Bible, this reliance does not involve infallibility. It might seem that there could be agreement upon proper methods of interpretation, but such agreement does not exist and has no infallible sanction. Even where there is an agreement upon common and accepted rules of interpretation, which make the literal sense primary and the figurative secondary, no unified results have followed. Churches honestly differ in their confessions of faith, and while all are certain of the correctness of their convictions, none can establish infallible standards upon a just moral basis. The claims of a mechanically infallible Bible, verbally perfect, do not hold in the light of the facts. But facts cannot be set aside without injury to truth and damage to moral sincerity, when they are clearly recognized.

There is one way in which the authority of religion can be justified as belonging to what we ought to believe. The religious and moral truth of the record of revelation comes to us and appeals to our conscience for decision. If we freely accept it, it becomes authoritative for us through our own consent. An authority acknowledged and received without compulsion by us is an entrance of our wills into the

truth offered. There is a self-evidencing power in the spiritual truth of the Bible when we apprehend it in its historical development. What the theologian calls the Word of God, namely, the spiritual content of the Bible, is an authority of freedom. It is not dependent upon a prior acceptance of an infallible record or any doctrine of inspiration.

In reality the conviction which the Word of God works in us, through its freely offered truth, becomes the basis of a belief in inspiration. We are ready not by any antecedent demand of infallibility to accept the teachings of the Bible, but when they have been received, we can, without injury to our liberty, so rely upon them as to concede their practical infallibility. It is our feeling that leads us then to the willing reception of the infallibility of that which has become divine truth for us through the convictions which it has wrought in us. Infallibility is not a prior, formal endorsement that comes with a compulsion, but a deduction which we draw out of the fulness of experience in our individual life and in the history of the Church. With this approach to infallibility in the authority of divine truth we do no injury to our moral freedom. We come to sense such infallible authority as free beings, and feel the claim of divine truth, however humanly mediated, as an obligation that has not been thrust upon us, but which we have grown to accept.

CHAPTER IV

God, Our Father

Among all beliefs none is so vital for ethics as a belief in God. What God is conceived to be deeply affects our morals. If the divine is plural instead of one, if it is amoral or immoral, it means much ethically. We can have a naturalistic ethic without God, but as soon as we have some kind of God we must either be degraded or elevated by what He is and means in our life. A God that does not influence us at all is only an idea. We must really be in relation to God to test the effect of His being and nature upon us. How closely God is connected with the moral life appears in the estimate which today is put upon the well-known philosophic proofs for the existence of God.

The argument from the necessity of thought only leads us to assume a greater than that which can be conceived. It is merely a conception of absoluteness and carries with it no guarantee of existence beyond our thought, and still less does it give any clue to what God actually is. When we trace back secondary causes to the first cause, or better, to the ground of the universe, we are only seeking a logical, unitary basis for causality and we can find nothing further in this effort of thought. The mind that lies back of the universe is inferred from the order and the purpose discovered in the examination of the universe with its adaptations and relations. But this complex of order and purpose only leads to a mind as great as the apparent plan of the whole world. We are still far from any real idea of a living God.

We come closest when we argue from the moral order of the world, from the necessity of the final adjustment of righteousness surpassing the inequalities of the present, for a power greater than ourselves making for righteousness. But such a moral power cannot remain impersonal if we are to judge from man and society.

What the moral proof for God indicates enables us to eliminate those ideas which must be set aside until we reach the best conception from a moral angle. All plural notions of gods, which divide up the universe among a number of powers controlling separate parts and spheres of existence, lack the unity of a real God. They seek unity in fate, or some pantheistic idea, that possesses no moral nature. In addition the pluralistic idea of God is always naturalistic, and sinks man into the sub-human in which he becomes immoral. But the present prevalent conceptions of the divine have historically passed beyond the pluralism of polytheistic religions. The moral demand for unity requires a personal God. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is not a separating plurality. As far as it can be defined, it rather describes a social unity of love in the inter-relation of personalities, and, therefore, an altogether ethical oneness through the agreeing and differing operations of Father, Son and Spirit upon human lives.

The poets have often in their imaginations and poetic creations passed from the flowers in the crannied walls, from the majesty of the trees, and from all the glories of mountain and valley, to some universal nature. They do not rest satisfied with the immediate concrete life. Daffodils and birds lead them further. Some, like Goethe, imagine an all-absorbing substance, infinite and universal, toward which all things tend and into which they merge. Others, like Wordsworth, are more entranced by the fulness and beauty of

nature, and unify all things into some great mystic universality, which is felt rather than conceived of. Still others, like Tennyson, in his poem, *The Higher Pantheism,* are struggling toward a God who is Thou, and yet embraces the whole of nature. They do not arrive at a definite thought, but remain in the twilight of blurred imagination.

The whole effort to find God in some emotional pantheistic speculation is a failure, and is either without moral bearing, or tends toward mere naturalism with all its moral temptations and dangers. We cannot find the ethical God through Keats or Shelley, nor through Swinburne or Watson. The highly praised American Walt Whitman has no moral standards in his democracy of naturalism. He only lives among the leaves of grass with the grasshoppers. Those who allow the average poets, who are not of the persuasion of Browning or Noyes, to guide them, will never find the God they need for their moral adventure and their ethical advance.

As little as the poets, who seek an emotional whole, are able to lead us into the apprehension of God, so little will we find satisfaction in the reflections of philosophers. The modern speculative thought is of two kinds. It either abandons all effort at unity and lives in the immediate world, which it calls reality, or it seeks some totality. The first group attaches the name of God, if it does say anything about Him, to the process of development. He is identified with the upward struggle and the developing movement of the world. He is totally immanent in all of nature and of human seeking and striving. In the attempt to bring God close to man He is altogether submerged into the changing and restless universe.

Modern theologians, who have thought that they could use the naturalistic immanence of God and make it spiritual, have failed to deliver the idea of God from inclusion in the

world to the detriment of His moral supremacy. Similarly the pluralistic realist and the chameleon-like pragmatist cannot point the way to a real, living God. Consciously or unconsciously they can only have a finite God if they have any God. For them God is "The Invisible King" of H. G. Wells. They knowingly or unknowingly accept the contentions of Hume when he attacks the power and goodness of God. In his estimate God is either powerful and will not curb evil or He is limited and cannot control it. To escape this dilemma modern realists and pragmatists make God good but impotent. But this position dethrones goodness and God. It is far below Plato for whom goodness is the highest, ultimate, infinite idea and ideal. The immanent God of the process, the God limited in the power of goodness, cannot remain the moral ideal to beckon us on. We need a higher conception of a personal, self-limiting God who gave us freedom. This God cannot be found among the realists, the pragmatists, and the consistent immanental theologians.

The other group follow the lead of either Spinoza or Schopenhauer. The Spinozistic coterie think of God either in terms of a non-contradictory absolute, like Bradley, or a universalistic meaning, like Royce, or the unique but not really personal spirit, like Hegel and Bosanquet. These absolutists or totalists finally conceive of God as a logical whole. Even the evolutional development of spirit, which Hegel advocates, does not really lead from pure being into actuality. There is nothing moral in the absolute. Good and evil are relatives in the finite appearance of the world. In the absolute reality there is no ethical character. These pantheistic philosophers may write a system of loyalty, like Royce, but it has no actual, personal God as the highest inspiration of loyalty. Such ideas of God are subversive of ethical principles in the individual and common life.

Schopenhauer began the speculations which stress will. But the will to live and the will to power of Nietzsche, and all similar will-philosophies do not begin with the will as a free power to choose good or evil. Will for the will-philosophers is physical or mental energy, an unconscious urge, which only comes to consciousness in man. Man is not really free where these theories of the will rule. There is no room for moral action. The spiritualization of mechanical energy has not given an ethical color to the absolute will. It moves through mankind with compelling and inescapable power. No one has better applied it in fiction than Thomas Hardy. Often this fatalism of will as energy is portrayed in terms of modern biology. Man is the creature of the process of evolution. He is absolutely made by it. Consequently there can be no really free man and no actually personal God. The God identified with the vital impulse of nature is only another variant of the theory of will as energy. Whether the force be mechanical, or biological, or whether it be spiritualized, it can never be interpreted as moral power. In it we can find no moral God.

It is evident that it is impossible to conceive of God in the light of the moral requirements in any sub-personal manner. The least that the nature of God must show is personality. It has often been objected that the ascription of personality to God is a limitation. This is true if personality be identified with individuality and its peculiarities. But there is a larger sense of personality, when it is taken as the term to express moral unity. There is no necessity to coin the word "super-personality" in order to escape the limitations of personality, if we do not use it in the sense of individuality. The ethical conception of person is an idea that far surpasses the term Infinite. When God is designated "The Infinite," it is a word of contrast over against the

finite. It is metaphysical and not ethical. A speculative philosophic idea like Infinite is quite ethically colorless, and is not religious nor moral in value.

The same objection holds against calling God substance. When the conception "substance" was used in connection with persons in the doctrine of the Trinity, it was partly relieved of its non-personal meaning. The counterbalance to the unity of substance in the term "person" changed the strong, impersonal coloring of substance. But even at its adoption through the influence of Athanasius the difficulty was felt. Its very author saw in these Greek terms, substance and person, an inadequacy. But when we note the philosophic modern development of "substance" we cannot endorse it. Since the time of Spinoza substance has been taken as the underlying, universal being of the universe. Substance as used at present would sink God into the universe or lose the universe in an impersonal God.

The best moral estimate of God is also hindered when His metaphysical attributes are given precedence over His essential moral nature. There is an emphasis upon God as almighty which is liable to make His might and power superior to His will. The logical consequence will then be to approximate the idea of God to energy and to fail in making the divine power subject to the divine personal character. Similarly the adjective omniscient is very appropriate when it is subsumed under God as love. If it be used as a noun, and we speak of omniscience, there is a tendency to think of God merely as intellect; and intellect as such and in itself is not personal nor ethical. Omniscience may be posited by any pantheist.

In like manner the conception of omnipresence leads to the notion of universal spirit, and this spirit can be thought of as impersonal. The philosophy of Hegel clearly illustrates

this use, for the spirit according to Hegel is no real personality. The omnipresent God must have the moral attributes emphasized as prior to the idea of omnipresence. The same difficulty that is found if the terms almighty, omniscient, and omnipresent, be made too prominent, will be encountered if we simply call God Spirit. Spirit is a metaphysical term. When Jesus used it He combined it in the description of man's worship with the idea of truth; but truth as used by Jesus is both ethical and religious.* The interpreters of Christ's words have not been careful in giving Spirit its living connection. The living Spirit must be personal, but whenever Spirit is used alone it becomes an abstraction and puts on the metaphysical garb. There has been too little regard for this fact both in philosophy and theology.

The central conception of God which Jesus taught is that of Father. God as King asking that His will be done in His kingdom, is secondary to God our Father. The sequence of the petitions in the Lord's prayer prove this. It is the kingdom of our Father for which we pray. God stands in paternal relation to us if we interpret fatherhood in its highest and noblest sense. St. John has interpreted God as Father by calling Him love. Our modern ideas of God have followed St. John much more than they have sought to understand Christ's term, Father. One result of this tendency has been to under-rate the idea of God. Because the word love is so commonly used for human affection, we have carried over the good and bad qualities of affection into the divine love. God has been depressed to the idea of an indulgent, kindly parent, who allows his children every liberty and can see no evil in any of their acts. Love has been sentimentalized. The story of the Prodigal Son has been told with the omission of the son's repentance as prior

* John 4: 24.

to forgiveness. God has been portrayed as loving in the same way as weak, human parents do. The flabby use of brotherhood has encroached on the Fatherhood of God. The German poet Schiller well expresses the sentimental notion of God when he says: "Brothers above the tent of the stars there lives a good Father." The "good Father" means the indulgent Father. Good is used as in the common expressions: "He is a good fellow"; "Let us have a good time." Good is identified with easy-going, pleasant, and has no moral connotation.

When Jesus uttered His great prayer on the night before His crucifixion, He addressed His Father as: "Holy Father."* Love is holy. It could not be real genuine love if it were not holy. Real love loves men for their own greatest good and blessing. But mankind cannot attain such goodness without vital righteousness and holiness. Holiness is the heart of God's love for us. Without it God would not love us for our present and ultimate happiness. The love of the wicked is to deliver them from their wickedness, and the love of the just is to keep them just. If we conceive of God as our Father in this sense we ought to believe in Him for He is our highest moral asset. From our Heavenly, Holy Father we receive the inspiration to perfection.† No other conception of God can rise to the height of the moral idealism of our Father as Jesus taught Him.

* John 17: 1.
† Matthew 5: 48.

CHAPTER V

Creation or Evolution

The problem of the right, ethical conception of God naturally leads us to the question of the relation of God to the universe and to mankind. This is one of the burning problems of today. It is too little considered from its moral implications. Either the point of view of mere nature, or the pressure of religious interest prevails. And therefore the alternative is formulated as creation or evolution. When we have examined what these alternatives imply for the ethical demand, we may suggest the solution of creation through evolution which we must carefully define and limit, so that we may not lose the moral import of creation.

The pure creationists stress the absolute liberty and power of God. They portray the universe as proceeding altogether from His sovereign will. The exaltation of the divine personality as it uses creative intelligence and might is marked. There could be no objection from the angle of ethics to the pure idea of creation as proceeding out of God Himself were it not for several considerations. First, the fundamentalist interpreters of creation who derive their conceptions, as they think, from the creation story in Genesis, overlook the revelation of God in nature itself with its probabilities. They are mostly not actual students of nature and do not give sufficient value to the indications of natural facts. The hypothetical explanation of how nature developed is underestimated, and its cogency is not justly and

logically valued. But this evidence of God's work cannot be so lightly set aside, if we are to consider all truth and not shut ourselves off from all possible evidence. It is a moral requirement to weigh all evidence with its probable inferences. The mistakes and inaccuracies of individual scientists do not destroy the whole cumulative effect of the gathered facts, which call for explanation.

The second mistake of the extreme creationists is that they include in their interpretations past scientific positions. In the whole discussion on the origin of species they use a pre-Darwinian usage of species and identify it with the non-scientific term "kind" in Genesis. There must be a careful, historical interpretation of the creation story in Genesis, and our imaginative use of it must eliminate the attachment at the start of any of the modern changing scientific theories. We must not turn a religious story into a manual of scientific explanation. This defect is an injury to the truth of the Genesis story, and diverts it from its real, religious meaning.

In the third place the direct creationists disregard the fact that God uses secondary causes in His creation. In a universe of orderly law and continuous development there appears another God than the arbitrary, miracle-working Spirit of the usual absolute creationists. In an almost mechanical manner God is supposed to have carried on His creative work. He is a constantly interfering God. Is this estimate worthy of God? Does it really exalt Him ethically? Is He not made after the image of a human artificer? Truth requires that we should rather observe how God operates in nature, than to conjecture how, from our idea of His might, He ought to create. We shall not save the best religious interest by any such procedure.

But the pure creationist preserves much ethical value. In

his emphasis on a personal God he upholds the foundations of morals. A God submerged into a developing universe, or a universe in its unfoldment identified with God, is no secure basis for ethical life. The personal God of the pure creationist must be maintained, even if we find it necessary to make evolution the method of creation below man. Again, it is necessary to allow this personal, ethical God to be the real originator of the universe and man. The answer which is demanded by moral considerations is the superiority of spirit over matter. In the world of man and the order of society there is an urgent necessity for a personal and moral God to explain the power of the moral order.

The case is far different with the pure evolutionist. Pure evolutionism is the hypothesis of the development of the universe altogether out of itself. No trace of any real creation remains. It may be called creative evolution, but mostly the evolution is the only creator. At the beginning there is posited undifferentiated matter through which energy acts. The self-movement is without any first mover not moved, whom Aristotle accepted. The simple and homogeneous is succeeded by the complex and heterogeneous. Chaotic matter is integrated into definite forms, and energy is transmitted from one kind to another kind. A mechanical stress and strain runs through all evolution. But the chemical reactions soon begin. Out of the many elements and electrical action all substances arise. There is no end of the causative influence of chemical action. It is found not only in the inorganic but in the organic world. Out of the carbohydrates, proteids, etc., living tissue comes forth. Chemical action produces taste and smell. The glands through their chemical juices help to make man. Along the nerves there pass chemico-electrical currents. The chemistry of the brain conditions thought.

The biological process in which the chemical action functions leads from the lowest forms up to man. The development of the human embryo passes through all the stages of living forms. It is supposed to be a summary of all that man is in his origin. All the animal functions appear in man, and he has in him the remnants of vestigial organs, as e. g., in the vermiform appendix, the third eyelid, and similar survivals. His ancestor is related to the antecedent of the ape.

In the strata of the earth there are found the bones of man from the apparently earliest form of the Java Trinil man up to the Pithecanthropos Erectus, and the Neanderthal man. There is no psychical without the physical in man, and he cannot be understood in his mental make-up except as we know him physiologically. His sensations are mere sensitivity. His consciousness is trasitive focalization. "Mind denotes the whole system of meanings as they are embodied in the workings of organic life."* Language arises from the movements of the larynx, and through language we obtain meaning and arrive at what is called thought, which in its essence is only organic behavior. Thus man with all that he is must be classified as a behaving animal. His morals are only highly differentiated actions influenced by the demands of society. His conscience is the result of the playing in upon him of the behavior of society. All morals are purely natural actions subject to the incitement of pleasure. Man has no immortal soul, and he possesses only a limited personality arising out of his various behavioristic complexes. There is no God except one call evolution God. Of the ground of the universe it is asserted: "Some call it evolution, and some call it God." This pure evolutionism is the utter destruction of all real ethics. It is atheistic

* Joseph Ratner, *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, p. 82.

and anti-moral. Wherever those who have any belief combat this sort of evolution they are fighting for the acceptance of both God and morals.

There is a third possibility which is creation through evolution. This hypothesis acknowledges God as creator, and finds in evolution His method of beginning and continuing the universe. It does not deny the apparent inferences of secondary causes, but it holds that God, as first cause, operates in and through secondary causes. There is a difference between this attitude and creative evolution. In creative evolution evolution is the main idea, in creation through evolution creation is the primary conception. When Bergson speaks of creative evolution, and posits the vital impulse as the creative force, he passes from the material to the spiritual realm. Nevertheless he only spiritualizes evolution, and does not really stress creation and glorify the creator. Creation through evolution preserves both the personal God and the mind and soul of man. It finds no contradiction between the best ascertained facts with their justifiable inferences and Christian belief. For it there is great value in the non-scientific account of creation in Genesis. Whatever its origin in Semitic history it is marked in all its simplicity by several features that are often overlooked by those who are so ready to reject the whole creation story in Genesis.

First, it is purely theistic. Its God is the personal, moral God who is no mere demiurge or artificer of matter, but the real spiritual creator of the universe. This distinguishes it from all other creation accounts in any religion. Its God cannot be set aside by any new discovery in nature. Second, it is entirely free from any mythological elements. The stories to which it is most closely related are full of the conflict of various gods. And all other religions cannot

qualify as possessing accounts which are so purely without mythology. Third, its account, which is a simple series of pictures for the imagination of man, relates that God called upon the earth first to bring forth plant life. Then there followed the fish of the sea, and the land animals. This succession is exactly that which modern biology assumes to have taken place. Man also is connected with the earth; his body is of the earth and earthy. In this way he is bodily linked up with all previous creatures.

But now a divergence must be noted. God puts into man His spirit, and makes him the special living creature which he is. There is a break here between connected succession through special creative fiat. As little as life has really been produced from the inorganic, so little has man's spiritual nature been derived from the earth and through animal mediation. It is here where the maintenance of moral validity requires a human nature beyond that of the animal. Man must be in the spiritual image of God to reach his ultimate destiny. God, our Father, as Spirit cannot have abandoned us to mere materiality. The whole ideal valuation of God and man is bound up with the belief in a creation which sets man apart from the rest of creation in the origin of his spirit, its worth and its destiny. Below man there is every indication of God operating through secondary causes and means in the production and maintenance of the inorganic realm, and the plant and animal life.

When we consider the continuance of creative impetus in all the development of nature below man we must infer that God is still working through all the variations and struggle of physical life. It is not inconsistent with this operation to find divine providental care in the life of man in keeping with man's spiritual aspect. The Father who clothes the lilies with glory, and without whose knowledge

no sparrow falleth to the ground, has made man of more value. Whatever the peculiar experiences of human life, its trials and vicissitudes, its good fortune and success may be, they are somehow evidences of divine thought and impact upon our life. There are two extremes that must be avoided in the interpretation of our life and its course.

The first is the conception that we altogether control our lives and make them what they are. If this be the whole truth then we are masters of our fate and captains of our souls. But too many uncontrolled and undesigned occurrences happen to us. We cannot honestly claim that our life and our destiny is shaped in every detail by our own deliberations and choices. In some of the most important elements of our life we are by no means self-made men and women.

The other extreme is the idea that we are completely the children of fate. With this thought as the ruling conception we have no part at all in the determination of what we shall be. Our characters are in part inherited, in part made by environment. While we suppose that we are choosing our place and deciding upon our vocations, life is playing with us, and simply allowing us to be deceived through the illusion that we are acting when we are merely being acted upon. Such a belief destroys all morality, all real duty and responsibility. It is as wrong as the deceptive pride by which we hold that we have made ourselves. There are many sudden changes, many little experiences that come upon us. We may call them good or bad luck, and classify them as undesigned happenings and as accidental. But thus we surrender ourselves to an unmoral fatalism. It is just in such apparently trivial, little, unplanned incidents that our life may be completely diverted from one channel to another. If we find God's direction in them we take a real ethical at-

titude. The recognition of divine care for us spurs us on to better moral effort. This idea, equally distant from fatalism and mere self-control, furnishes the best basis for our moral progress.

The problem of creation or evolution also appears in the question of the social development of mankind, and in its whole history. The naturalistic point of view connects the first social forms of mankind with the animal herd. Out of the herd the tribe is supposed to grow, and the family is separated from the tribe. Tribes and clans develop into nations. In this whole natural process the urge is the desire for food, clothing, and shelter. The sex pressure regulates life and shapes social complexes. In this building up of mankind records are taken of what took place. No matter how idealistically men may think of their advance and their progress in civilization, it is only economic desire which urges mankind on. It produces war and peace; it stimulates discoveries and brings about inventions. All the migrations of man, his struggles and victories, and even his poetry and art are but the fruitage of economic considerations. These may not always be clearly in the consciousness of men but they nevertheless rule and control all common life. There is no room for any moral judgment of mankind with such an evolutionary explanation of all that mankind has experienced and accomplished.

The sane, opposite view is not a dreamy idealism which overlooks all the realistic forces that affect human society. There must be due allowance for the material powers that so often rule men. Nevertheless there is a moral order which makes for righteousness. While men are conditioned by material and economic reasons, they are also striving to realize liberty and justice. The interpretation of history in the lives of great men and in the common movements of

mankind is not exhausted by noting only the external forces. There are real idealisms in the sacrifice of lives, in the abandonment of comfort to attain some aim of art, in the sympathetic helpfulness of men toward each other, and in the great religious assertions.

It does not always appear, as Schiller thought, that the history of the world is the judgment of the world. But still in all the inequalities, and in all the unrighted injustice, there is not enough evidence to set aside the existence of the moral order. Truth, honesty, justice, uprightness, and like moral virtues have a permanence in the world. Truth crushed to earth does rise again. Honesty in the long run is the best method of business. Justice however oppressed does come back and insure the perpetuity of human institutions. Uprightness lives longer than crookedness. As we regard the whole of human life in its social aspect we find enough facts to permit us to infer that God's creative direction has not forsaken mankind. Although He allows us the utmost freedom, and often seems to have withdrawn Himself from the course of events, still in the end He rules in some crisis and prevails amid the tangled affairs of men. We can therefore hold fast to our belief in God's directive, creative guidance in a world that is and must remain finally a moral world.

CHAPTER VI

The Power of Evil

Among the many problems of belief as it is related to the ethical demand none has been debated so often, with apparently so little result, as the problem of evil. It has frequently been made metaphysical although it is fundamentally a moral question. Its metaphysical implications must grow out of its ethical aspect. If we approach it from the moral angle we may avoid ethical difficulties even if we do not solve it metaphysically. The first question about evil that arises in the human mind, and that is always proposed when anyone begins to think of the problem of evil, is, Whence did evil come? This is one of those questions which cannot be answered directly, but toward which we can move with probability by estimating the danger of alternatives.

Shall we trace evil back to God? We cannot assign its origin to God without denying His character as our Father, and making Him an untrue, deceptive God. It is true that He gave us the liberty to choose good and evil without making us so determinately good that we could not do evil. The whole risk of freedom was taken by God. The only escape would have been to make us unfree. What is better, a compulsory goodness, which is essentially no goodness, or liberty with all its right of experiment and adventure?

If the responsibility is that of human freedom was man the inventor of sin? If we accept this answer we condemn man so utterly that his moral release seems impossible. Did

man deliberately say, "Evil be thou my God"? If we see how men often drift into evil, and what part ignorance and desire play, and how great are the provocations, then we shall hesitate to make man the creator of evil. The ethical difficulties in attributing the origin of evil either to God or man compel us to seek another solution.

Is it not ethically more probable to assume a source of evil which comes to man through temptation? As all moral attitudes are lodged in persons, and are found in the relation of one person to another, we cannot depersonalize evil. To speak of evil in the abstract is as unreal as to assert goodness as a mere idea. We must, therefore, assume the personal embodiment of evil. Consequently it is more moral to accept the belief, that there is a devil, than to hold either God or man responsible finally. This is the most probable answer that has been found which contains fewer moral difficulties than any other answer thus far suggested. It raises metaphysical problems of the struggle of good and evil, or of God and Satan, which are hard to answer, but it preserves the moral interest best.

The question of the origin of evil leads us inevitably to the problem of the nature of evil or sin. A variety of answers has been given to this query, but we must decide which reply best complies with the moral claim. A very common answer has been to explain evil as negative. The thought back of this idea is to give value to the final positive and constructive nature of goodness. Evil is made destructive and negative. But the difficulty with this conception is that it minimizes the power and effect of sin. The destroying quality of evil does not really make it negative. It is very positive in its attitude and very positive in its results. The fight against evil is hindered as soon as it is estimated negatively instead of positively. There is a letting down of

moral strength whenever the wrong is not valued in its full opposing power to all that is right and good.

There are thinkers who connect evil with the finite nature of man. The deception and illusion of sin, as it approaches man with its tempting allurements and its seductive promises, are successful because of man's inexperience and ignorance. Man cannot in many cases foresee results of acts, but he is subject to the method of trial and error. Thus man experiments with good and evil. Is not this trial an accompaniment of man's freedom? When youth begins its life of larger independence, and seeks to hew out its path through the entanglements of life, will it not in the ferment of adolescence try out what is forbidden? It is natural for man to react against prohibitive law. Thus it happens that in the days of habit formation men easily drift into evil ways. Shall they be condemned, as finite and seeking mortals, when they lose the right way in the dark urge to find themselves and to come to self-realization? Desires are with them and ask to be gratified. Passions assert themselves. The forbidden fruit tastes so sweet.

But after we make all allowance for the uncertainties and limitations of man's knowledge of right and wrong, and note how the moral code has been gradually established, it still remains true that there are always guiding reactions of conscience. Of course responsibility cannot be demanded beyond the possibility of the clear knowledge of the right. But men often disregard the knowledge attained. It is particularly true that liberty is abused and the experience of life attested by former generations is set aside. It is not in the finiteness but in the attitude of wilful opposition that evil comes to light. If we blame human finiteness for sin we must accuse God as creator. We bring Him into opposition with Himself as requiring the good, and yet not making it possible

for man to do it if human finiteness is the hindrance. Nothing is asked of us by our Father except what is just and right. Our finiteness does not excuse us for our volitions and acts. If it did exonerate us there could be no moral ideal and no real duty.

Among the pantheistic philosophers, who see perfection in the absolute totality, we find an effort to explain evil very similar to that of the hypothesis of finiteness. It is the absolute wholeness of the universe, the comprehensive singleness of reality, in which all things are resolved into non-contradiction which pantheists assert. Harmony is only realized when the discordant notes of life are fused into the full and complete chord of the absolute. Evil is partial reality. As all truth in its separateness from totality is partially error, so all right apart from the completeness of the wholeness of reality is partial wrong. In turn no evil or sin is, therefore, in real contrast with the right and the good. It is only defective through its partiality, and it will be resolved when all intentions, thoughts and acts of man are gathered up into the ultimate absolute. What man calls right and wrong, good and evil, has no place in the absolute.

According to Bradley there are no moral attributes in the absolute. Hegel passes from positive to negative and finally to neutral. Everything moves from thesis to antithesis to synthesis. In the final synthesis all human moral contrasts are absorbed. The ultimate meaning of totality will do away with the relativities of human loyalties. The final goodness encloses all the human minors in the great major harmony. All sin is swallowed up, and its sting is taken away, if we wait for the finality of the absolute wholeness of the universe. This highly optimistic conception of evil has very much underestimated the actuality of sin. It pours rosewater on ulcers. It has no personal God, and con-

sequently no real righteousness. All the value of the good is destroyed, and evil is minimized to the degree that men lose the sense of its destructive effect upon human life. If the arguments of pantheistic universalism are carried out, they lead to actual immorality. Only as men fail to practise what they preach are the pantheists better than the effects of their hypothesis. The absolutist elimination of evil is positively detrimental to moral endeavor and advance.

The pantheistic doctrine is, however, not popularly as dangerous today as evolutional naturalism. It has become a very widespread idea that we are purely children of nature. All that we are and do is natural. Can we then be blamed for being what the necessary causes of nature have made of us? To err is human, and if we do wrong the fault lies not in us but in our stars. This fatalistic naturalism has widely affected men. It has paralyzed moral earnestness and killed moral judgments. It has become current through biological and psychological speculations. The hypothesis of heredity, which has been given mathematical exactness through Mendelism, is applied without limit to our mental and moral nature. We are supposed to inherit not only bodily traits and characteristics, but also mental predispositions and moral or immoral aptitudes. The claim of some biologists that acquired characteristics are not handed down has been set aside by the eugenists. Our ancestry is held responsible for our mentality, and our virtues and vices.

Strange to say this conception of heredity agrees in part with the old Christian doctrine of inherited sin. There is apparently a solidarity of the race in which we are all bound up. In this solidarity we are heirs of the evil of the past. But the moral problem is, whether we are personally responsible for inheritances unless we accept and adopt them. The connection of men with the past of mankind and its evil

ought not be made blameworthy in itself. But unfortunately generation after generation reasserts the wrong, and thus inherited evil lives on. It is here where moral guilt and responsibility enter in. But this idea is totally different from the naturalistic hypothesis of heredity. According to it there is no guilt or responsibility at all. The Christian doctrine of original sin in its most extreme form is far superior to the naturalistic idea. The latter abolishes all morality. The former deals with moral problems, but it must avoid the assignment of personal guilt to inherited evil. The guilt can only be that of common humanity in its solidarity according to moral judgment. The individual shares in the common condemnation because he belongs to the race. The case is not different from the responsibility of an individual in national decisions, and in the past national inheritances of wrong. The only question is, whether the individual again takes up the inheritance of the race and adds to its burden of guilt by his own acts.

Another side of this naturalistic conception of evil is seen in the emphasis upon environment. No one doubts that our surroundings have a great influence upon us. We cannot escape the atmosphere of our homes. Our own city and country shape us into certain attitudes. Our education deeply affects us, and leads us either one way or another. The companionships and friendships that we form have a strong influence upon us. The sort of marriage we enter into makes of us certain kinds of men and women. Who can measure the subtle power of the whole milieu in which we live, move and have our being? What sort of moral and religious environment are we subject to? These and many like questions arise, and call for an answer. But when we have made due allowance for all that our surroundings do to us, are we the mere unconscious and involutary creatures of environ-

ment? A positive answer to this question is contradicted by the fact that we still have the feeling of responsibility, and that we experience remorse and sorrow for the wrong done. The environmental hypothesis goes too far when it destroys our moral life. We can react against environment. Its forces cannot control us to the degree of our loss of responsibility. It is an idle excuse to escape from our own guilt for evil by blaming our surroundings. This explanation of sin and evil is really immoral.

After all these solutions of the nature of evil have proved detrimental to morality in its vital reality, what shall we suggest? There are two fundamental considerations that we ought to keep in mind. First, we must again consider the origin of evil. If evil has come to us from beyond humanity, it is necessary to give due weight to its power. As sin is no human invention in its original form it behooves us to note seriously that our struggle is not only against our own flesh and blood. It is not an excusable animal nature that we possess, which expresses itself in our desires and passions. Sin also lives in the spiritual realm and not merely in the bodily life. Its origin is spiritual lawlessness and selfish pride. This estimation of evil makes temptation a very serious affair that cannot be dealt with lightly.

Second, the assumption of the superhuman impingement of evil upon us through the existence of Satan does not grant an escape from our moral responsibility. It presents no excuse for any wrong and evil thoughts and deeds. If this be true, then we must see how evil approaches us and how it spreads from one to another. There is no better psychology than that of the story of the first sin in Genesis, chapter three. It leaves no room for the materialistic, behavioristic psychology of today which animalizes man. According to the account in Genesis the beginnings of evil

in man start by not avoiding the first invitation to break God's good will through an alluring temptation. Then desire arises and takes hold of man, the desire for the forbidden indulgence. It is glorified as leading to intelligent experience, as bringing liberty, and as making man godlike in power and choice. The act of indulgence in sin follows. The sin passes from one person to another, and it becomes social. The reality of this story can be tested every day. Its psychology is founded on the realism of life. The results that follow the evil deed are just as true to experience as the account of the temptation, the desire and the deed. The evil breaks out strongly in the next generation through the murder of Cain, who allows the sin crouching at the door of his heart to seize him. His jealousy and envy are the sparks that light the fire of murder.

The spiritual reality of this Genesis story is far superior in moral quality and worth to all other attempts to solve the problem of evil. What our modern age needs is an honest, sincere restudy of the early oracles of our faith in order to regain the estimate of evil which is more moral than all other proposals for this vexing problem of evil. It is the belief that finds the essence of the old biblical story which alone maintains ethical integrity, and secures the right basis for the fight against evil, and for the understanding of deliverance from it through redemption.

CHAPTER VII

The Victory Over Evil

No victory over evil is needed when evil is minimized. If evil is purely negative it will slowly be eliminated by the positive power of increasing goodness. When sin is made the inevitable accompaniment of our finite nature it will always exist as long as finite, human beings live. There can be no overcoming of evil if it is an essential element of finiteness. The interpretation of evil and sin as merely a temporary disharmony calls for no conquest, but only describes a passing phase of the world of appearance. But appearance shall be seen in the light of reality. The total absolute has already resolved evil. On this supposition it is only our failure to recognize the ultimate whole of the universe which causes us trouble about evil. If sin is only the survival of animality in us two consequences follow. First, we cannot account as evil that which is the inescapable physical inheritance in all of our being. Second, since we are in the body, and cannot be separated from the physical basis of our life, the inherited animal tendency will remain. All of these hypotheses know nothing about fight against evil, and they cannot admit that we need to overcome evil.

When the hypothesis of evolution is applied to the development of human society its interpretation is changed from the advance of simple forms to complex existences to the progress from worse to better conditions of life and morals. With an assured confidence the assertion is made that man-

kind is evolving into a life in which not only the outer control of the religious, moral and political sanctions cease, but also the inner control of the sense of duty. Coercions pass away and the ethical life is pictured as a natural blossoming and fruitage of righteousness. An unbounded optimism sweeps many off their feet in the hope that we are rolling into glory. Facts are collected to show how our civilization has advanced, and how many are our present advantages. But has real culture kept step with material civilization? Have the advances in discovery and invention, the progress in the possession of many comforts, the forward movement in general knowledge, been accompanied by the fine qualities of character that distinguish real culture? It is being claimed that we do not possess the character that enables us to use for the best of mankind our many scientific discoveries. We partly turn them to good use, but we also turn them to wrong and destructive use. While we are struggling to abolish war, we have by no means come any nearer to overcoming crime. It is true that slavery has been abolished, and that we are struggling all over the world with the problem of temperance or prohibition. But in the latter issue we are very far from the goal, and the battle wages to and fro.

History shows that we have advanced in some virtues, but we have also retrograded in others. Dishonesty and fraud are mighty, pecculation and theft are frequent, and the sins of sex have not decreased. Many sins have become refined but they have not been conquered. It is entirely possible, as the age of renaissance demonstrates, to have high intellectualism, and wonderful art, and yet at the same time to be morally corrupt. In the weighing of evidence we dare not look at it through the golden glow of optimism, nor through the dark glasses of pessimism. We must keep a

balanced judgment. While we ought not to overlook the good in society and in individual men, still honesty forces us also to see the evil. The hypothesis, that we are advancing ethically without obtaining the victory over evil, is not finally tenable.

We have had occasion to hold that evil is more than human. With the admission of this fact we must become conscious of our own inability to win the battle against evil. There are thinkers who go beyond the naturalistic evolutionism, which claims that the natural process itself is leading us from the simple presentative experiences to the re-presentative, from the crudeness of action to its refinement, from its natural simplicity of conduct to its moral complexity. These speculators attribute the power to man to overcome evil in his own strength and by his own will. Man is made morally competent and the master of his own character. Any temptation that implies superhuman evil is denied. This opinion appears to give man moral freedom and to liberate him from any ethical tutelage. But although it seems highly moral the question remains whether it does produce the best ethical results. Are we able in the dark urge to find the right way? Are there no evil influences beyond the usual human ken that mislead us? How do we explain the intrusion into the minds of the purest of men of evil thoughts which are out of all agreement with their moral status?

There are scientists who believe that all evil can be traced to abnormal physical and bodily conditions. It is true that some criminal actions and some ethical abnormalities have their source in conditions of sickness. But the existence of some cases of abnormality does not prove that all evils are the result of mental or bodily deficiencies. Not all evildoers need to be put into hospitals. There is no absence of respon-

sibility wherever any wrong or crime is committed. Psychiatry has not been able to trace all evil to wrong mentality. Consequently evil is not finally a medical question. It must be overcome through moral means.

The victory over evil must be won in the conquest of the original source and power of sin. There is a great, fundamental conflict between God and Satan. A constant warfare of good against evil goes on in the supernatural world. The drama of sin conquered has God as its hero and actor. It is the control and power of the devil over man that must be broken if man is to have the chance of a new freedom. The whole race in its solidarity needs to be emancipated, so that the ethical interest will be paramount as it should be. The moral order must be transformed and its validity must be justified.

Among all religions Zoroastrianism has described this conflict of good against evil most realistically in the story of the power and fight of the good god, Ormuzd, against the evil machinations of the god of evil, Ahriman. But the defect in the Parsee religion is the overemphasis of the evil as a supernatural power. However the evil is to be finally annihilated. The hope of Zoroastrianism is universalistic and optimistic.

The Christian conception does not exalt Satan as Zoroastrianism elevates Ahriman. The Satan of Milton is not the Satan against whom Christ contends. The Miltonian devil is heroic and titanic. We remember him as seated and exalted "high on a throne which far outshone the wealth of Ormuzd and of Ind." Great as is the power of Satan, he is not to be portrayed extravagantly. Evil with all its seduction and dominion is not equal to God. The victory is never uncertain, nor is the combat doubtful. True moral

idealism is maintained if we conceive of evil as real, and yet as finally overcome and conquered through divine power.

But the victory obtained for us must become the victory in us. It is our duty to enter into the fruits of the divine conquest of Satan and sin. We must accept the deliverance wrought for us, and work with God to give the good its primary place in our lives. Our task is to co-operate in the making of a new moral order. The social realm for the highest good must be lived in. And finally we must look forward to the ultimate hope of eternity. Only as we accept these conditions, and strive for the realization of the good in all human endeavor, can we obtain the fruits of the divine victory. There will be no result for us through indifference. Our attitude can only be positive and constructive. He that is not for the good is against it.

Whenever man determines himself consciously against what is true and good he makes a very fatal decision. Our choices are never without consequences; finally they establish our whole character. If we form habits of evil, or vices, they will control us. The result is an actual slavery of evil. As God has allowed us the liberty of our determinations we must accept their outcome. But our life is not merely temporal; we have an eternal destiny, and the effects of our present character, and of our present life, persist into eternity. We make or unmake our future immortal happiness. In the light of these beliefs the problem of hell loses its apparent injustice and cruelty. Hell is made by us for ourselves. Our identification with evil, if it is made consciously and in normal conditions of body and mind, necessarily and justly condemns us to the final place of evil and Satan.

It is very remarkable that Jesus, whose great love we cannot doubt, has the most earnest warnings against the

final destiny of lives that chose the evil. He speaks of the outer darkness, the exclusion from the glorious wedding feast of heaven, the worm that does not die, and the fire that shall not be quenched.* There is no message about the annihiliation of evildoers. If sinners and evil were to be exterminated the effects of human life would only have a temporal value. In consequence the good also would needs be limited to the present life. Man's self-determination as an immortal soul toward the good is paralleled by man's desire for evil, and his choice of sin, with the same endless results. This explanation is more consistent with highest justice, and serves better for the maintenance of morality, than the sentimentality about evil, which today is creating such havoc in individual and common life. The present moral flabbiness and softness brings about the carelessness of men about their immortal souls, and their ultimate happiness or misery.

* Mark 9:44; Matt. 25:41; Matt. 22:1ff.

CHAPTER VIII

The Great Deliverance

The victory over evil is realized in the great deliverance of man. The liberation of mankind from the power of evil is the first result in the conquest of sin. The great world religions have sought to define the deliverance from evil in the terms and ideas of salvation. But there is a difference in the manner in which salvation is described and sought after. In Hinduism as well as Buddhism there is no salvation, unless every human desire and wish without moral distinction is killed off. Desire, wish and ambition are evil in themselves. Man as an individual, striving being in a concrete world of things must cease to be. The sensations and images which come to him in a world of appearance must be shut out so that he may gain the great liberation and the calmness of peace in a world of meditation and inward absorption into the absolute, the Atman or Brahma. According to Buddhism the human soul ceases to be. It is only the fate of human deeds, the Karma, which calls human beings back into this deceptive and illusive world. The effort must be never to return to this world of appearances by thoughts and deeds that bring final emancipation.

Christianity has no salvation of such complete self-elimination. It does not demand the practical destruction of our senses, feelings, emotions, desires and wishes. It wants to save our souls that we might have more abundant life. We are only bidden to lose the lower life that we

might gain the higher, better life. Every thought, feeling, emotion, attitude and action, are to be directed toward the good life. Not the striving as such is evil, but only its direction toward sin. The world is no illusion but a divine creation. All is good that God gives if it be rightly used. Salvation consists in deliverance, not from the actual world, and not from our own individual life in its concrete reality, but from the evil that despoils and destroys human life, and a world of beauty and order.

The existence of evil, which has come to the world and man through the original power of evil as personified in Satan, demands that the victory over evil be made, first, our deliverance from the awful control of the prince of darkness. He rules among men wherever the kingdom of moral disorder and of sin intrudes itself into our human life. The devil is called the god of this world, when the world is conceived of, not as the earth, but as the sinful and evil complexity of mankind.

In every age there are ideas and thoughts, customs and practises, pleasures and amusements, attitudes and deeds, that lead men to the enslavement of their lives under the bondage of immorality. Individuals are often largely controlled by the tendencies and trends of the times in which they live. These currents of ideas and actions are not a single stream of purity. Much evil flows through them along with the good. The salvation from Satan practically means the deliverance from the subtle power of Satanic ideas that crowd in upon men through social contacts. In some apparently only human thoughts Satan must be bidden to get behind us.* At times strong individualities do not think nor strive for God's thoughts; but they are purveyors of evil, and serve the god of evil. It is mostly through

* Matt 16: 23.

evil, human leadership, and sinful social conditions, that Satan rules. Sometimes he inserts himself into the mind of men by subtle suggestion, which becomes autosuggestion. From all this seductive control and power we receive deliverance through the moral perfection and power of Christ, the Redeemer. This deliverance from the influence and rule of Satan is a liberation from moral evil.

But the freedom from Satan's control, which comes through Christ, is only effected because salvation means liberation from the power of sin in our lives. The might of sin, and the consciousness of guilt which follows sin sooner or later, are overcome. The human conscience may frequently be silenced so that it does not react against the wrong we do. But at some time it does awaken and judge us, leading us to remorse and unrest of mind and heart. What is the nature of sin? How shall we define this evil that dwells in us?

Sin may be regarded as a missing of the mark, the failure to attain the goal of righteousness. Or it can be described as trespass or transgression, the stepping across the line of the right. It is an unpaid debt, because it does not meet the obligation of righteousness and the claim of duty toward God and man. But these various ways of looking at sin all lead finally to the conviction, that the essence of evil is lawlessness. The right which is violated is the right of the fundamental moral law. The heart of the law is love. The breaking of the law arises from selfish motives. Self-assertion to the degree of the exclusion of the good is making our own will law. But this action is essentially disobedience. And it is the offence of disobedience to the law of love which is the source of all corruption in mankind.* From

* Romans 5: 19.

this ruling disobedience we must find deliverance. How shall the liberation be accomplished?

From the prevalent disobedience against the law Christ wrought deliverance through His obedience.* The very center of the atonement is not a mystical act, but the new attitude of obedience by the Redeemer. The whole life of Jesus was one of constant, submissive oneness with the Father. From His baptism to the cross His whole thought and His entire purpose found utterance in the adoption of the word of the Psalmist: "I come to do Thy will." Righteousness through love was the aim of Christ and He reached it. Never by thought, word or deed did He violate the law, but He found His joy in fulfilling it in filial obedience. No unsatisfied debt of the law stood against Him. Jesus lived in the law because He lived in love. True, and not boastful or pretensive, selflessness characterized His every attitude and act. Love was made a reality among men through Him. Moral perfection marked the whole course of the life of the Christ. His sinlessness was not mere negative abstention from wrong-doing, but positive goodness which spent itself for men ceaselessly in deeds of helpfulness and healing both for body and soul.

The greatest moral victory and, therefore, deliverance for men came through Jesus in His suffering and by His sacrifice upon the cross. It was there that His obedience shone out most brightly. He increased in obedience through suffering though He was the Son of God.† His divine nature did not exempt Him from a growth in the deepening of His obedient attitude. The deity of Jesus was not a possession thrown into the scale of suffering and sacrifice to give them value. Truly human, though without sin, Christ lifted from humanity the burden of the guilt and power of

* Romans 5: 19. † Hebrews 5: 8.

disobedience by giving up His life freely as a ransom.* The greatness of love as the fulfillment of the law was shown in that Christ died for men while they were yet sinners. He loved to the uttermost to make men free. This saving sacrifice was thoroughly ethical and in no way magical. The obedient spirit of Jesus made His death a real effective sacrifice. It had no ceremonial figurativeness, and it possesses no sentimental dramatism.

But the obedience of Jesus in His death on the cross is also a rectification of the moral order. The cross would not be ethical in the fullest sense if it only exhibited rescuing love. Many modern interpreters have sentimentalized the cross, and they have lowered its moral meaning by separating love from holiness. The cross is the tree of sin. On it He that knew no sin was made sin for us.† He suffered and bore the curse of evil. The cross for the criminal showed visibly the curse of sin in mankind. It is therefore that St. Paul says: "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."‡ Every criminal act is only an extreme case of the moral corruption and the destructive power of evil. An execution is the testimony of society against the evil, and an effort to re-establish the moral order. Jesus willingly entered into the bearing of the effects of sin in order to remove its power from mankind. The crucifixion did not come upon Jesus suddenly, nor was He unwilling to bear His cross and to suffer death. No one really took His life from Him, He freely surrendered it. It is utterly wrong to portray Christ as one caught in the mesh of circumstances, a martyr by faith, and not a Saviour by choice. The moral disorder of evil, and the universal, ethical corruption through sin, needed removal through a signal re-establishment of the integrity and force of the moral order.

* Mark 10: 45. † II Cor. 5: 21. ‡ Gal. 3: 13.

To deny this value of Christ's obedience on the cross is to detract from the ethical worth of the atonement. A moral softness, which has lost the earnestness of sin, and has overlooked the essentiality of holiness for the world, has injured the moral deliverance of man from the guilt and power of sin. It has denied that Christ bore the pain of punishment, and the sting of sin, through the sustaining strength of His obedient love.

The objection has been raised again and again, that the suffering of Christ for us as a substitute is in contradiction with the moral responsibility of every one for his own deeds, be they evil or good. The substitutional theory of atonement is set aside as being morally defective. Each one must answer for his own acts and for his own misdeeds. But the problem of sin cannot be treated justly by making it only an individual concern. Evil rules over all men. We are in the common bondage as sin passes from man to man, and as it infects all humanity. It must be removed either by the total mankind, or by some one who is generic and universal. In every sacrifice the one who presents it identifies the sacrifice with himself. The sacrifice is conceived of as in some way one with the sacrificer. It was the custom that the person offering the sacrifice laid the hand on the animal to be offered. Human sacrifice, which was early avoided in Israel, consisted in the offering up of some one of the same family, as e. g., a child; or in a tribe some real representative of the tribe was sacrificed. The idea of the solidarity of life in its moral as well as in its physical aspect underlies the sacrifice of one on behalf of others. Jesus, as the Son of man, bearer of the past of mankind, and beginner of a new, redeemed humanity, is one with all men spiritually as their real brother. If the result of His redemption had the effect of making men morally lax, the opposition to His sacrifice

for us might be sustained; but His sacrifice for sin imparts to us the inspiration of a new, righteous life. The objective reconciliation is not unethical when we consider the unity of mankind morally as well as spiritually.

The final result of the great deliverance has been called salvation from death. Evil is both physically and morally destructive, and leads to the undoing of man. The moral law is ingrained in the conditions of life. When it is broken life suffers and decays. The last consequence of sin is death. In the physical world it is impossible to violate the laws of health with impunity. The more we sin against our body the more we tend toward death. The same sequence holds in the ethical sphere. Both the individual and society will be destroyed in the long run when evil rules. Now the Christ delivers from the ultimate consequences of moral guilt and ethical deadness. Men must often suffer the physical results of evil, either through acts of their own or through the sin of the fathers being visited upon the children in their consequences. But when the condemnation of sin in death is averted by Christ's atonement we have moral freedom. The liberty through the great deliverance by Christ extends to the utmost in relieving us of the moral guilt and punishment with death as the outcome, and in reinstating us into the new order of life of the children of God.

CHAPTER IX

Why Incarnation

The problem of the deliverance of man through Christ, the Redeemer, cannot evade the question of the incarnation. Why did God the Son become man? The answer to this inquiry is made altogether metaphysical by some theologians. These speculators see in it, either the completion of humanity as it is lifted up into unity with the divine, or the realism of the deity as it is shown in man who is God's image. But in neither attitude is there any connection directly with the redemption of man. Thus incarnation becomes a great mystical belief which is paralleled in Hinduism by the faith in various avatars, or divine appearances on earth. No distinctive character is manifest in the Christian doctrine of incarnation according to this interpretation. There is an approximation to similar beliefs found in other religions. No ethical worth can be attached to such an idea.

In opposition to the metaphysic of the divine reality in human appearance we have the rationalistic conception, that the finite cannot contain the infinite. Spinoza first formulated this thought pregnantly when he said: "The finite cannot contain the infinite."* The limited human nature with its own peculiar characteristics, and its concrete existence in individualities, who have decided idiosyncracies, cannot be conceived to be able to enter into any real union with the

* *Finitum non est capax infiniti.*

infinite God even if He be thought of as a person. How, ask the objectors, can almightiness live in human weakness, omniscience in the restricted knowledge of man, omnipresence in a being confined to time and space? Localization excludes universal presence. The whole difficulty lies in the question of divine self-limitation of which a personal God is capable. If God controls His own nature and being through His own power incarnation is not impossible. Consequently the Son of God in the desire of His love became man and is master of His nature and not subject to any limitations of what He is and what He can become. We cannot restrict the infinite personality of the divine Son in His freedom and power of condescending love. But, finally, this problem thus discussed is abstract, and it must give way before the historical testimony of Jesus about Himself, and the fact of His whole earthly life.

But this historical testimony is assailed by the doubts of the group of naturalistic rationalists. They hold that the meaning of "Son of God" in the New Testament has been misunderstood. From a mere messianic import it has been changed through wrong interpretation into a metaphysical term. Jesus was made a mythological figure by His followers. The same supernatural elements were attached to His birth that we find in the Buddha and Zoroaster legends. Miracles, which can mostly be explained today in a natural way, are no proofs of Christ's deity. The real, historical Jesus was soon obscured, and He was deified by the myth-forming and legend-creating tendency found in all religions.

The difficulty with this rationalistic elimination of the divine in Jesus is the human personality which remains after all supernatural attributes have been taken away. The marvelous perfection of Christ's human character is superior to all human personalities of whom we have any knowledge

or historical record. There appears in Jesus the balance of every temperament without defect, a unity of strength and gentleness, of purity and of a true understanding of evil, of a high holiness and of a sympathy for sinners. Jesus exhibits a love without sentimentality, a sinlessness that has no patronizing coldness and aloofness, a real attachment to Israel, and a surpassing breadth of humanity. How can such a completeness of life, such an exceptional and unique character, be adequately explained by inclusion in the category of the purely human? It is the actual, historical Jesus, considered at first in His human character alone, who leads beyond the human. Thus He led His first disciples from the idea that He was a teacher and prophet, to the confession, that He was the Son of the living God.* But this defense which rests on the moral perfection of Jesus is only a rebuttal. The question, Why incarnation? still remains to be answered.

The reason why the Son of God became man, and why the eternal Word took on flesh and blood,† is first and pre-eminently the necessity of the deliverance of man through redemption. Incarnation is based upon the fact that no man could render the obedience that was needed to take away the disobedience of the sin of mankind. The moral demand of the atonement could not be met by a mere man. Such perfect obedience as the sacrifice for sin called for could not be found among men in the line of mere human heredity. But still it was only in human form that the obedience could be rendered. Just as the perfection of the life of Jesus is inexplicable without going beyond and above the human into the divine, so the full, ethical harmony, which complete and perfect obedience had to re-establish for man's deliverance, demands more than the actual, usual, concrete human

* Matt. 16: 16. † John 1: 1.

nature. It calls for the actuality of the ideal man, and whence could he come except from the supernatural world. The unrealized man who lost the divine image had to be realized through obedient goodness. This was only possible through the Son of God by whom all things were made,* and from whom man in his spirit came.

St. Paul most consistently connected the obedience of the atoning Christ with the obedience rendered by the incarnate Christ.† Jesus could have lived as God on earth; but His incarnation does not mean the revelation of divine glory to overshadow the human. It would have been no robbery had He shown Himself in a life equal to God. But He assumed human form, and lived as a man and a servant. He emptied Himself of His divine power and glory, and did not use them among men. Thus He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.‡ In order to render saving obedience Jesus was found in fashion as a man, and humbled Himself to the estate of a servant, although He was the eternal Son. The priceless value, therefore, of the incarnation is the moral necessity of the atoning obedience of holy love manifest in Jesus. It is this conception through which incarnation receives its ethical signature.

The atoning obedience of the incarnate Christ implies other aspects of the incarnation. The perfect man to cover the disobedience of the race must needs be the universal man. As the race is one in origin, and as evil reigned over all men from the beginning, thus this universal condition demands a new beginning which cannot be found in the old heredity.§ There could be no help through the old connected line of mankind conditioned by all its past. The validity of heredity excluded the rise of the perfect, ideal man out

* John 1: 3.
† Romans 5: 19; Phil. 2:5ff.
‡ Phil. 2: 5ff.
§ Romans 5: 12ff.

of humanity itself. Therefore the Son of God became man so that He might be the spiritual ancestor of a new, redeemed mankind. From Adam came sin, but from Christ righteousness and life. This conception also rests on a moral foundation. The whole problem is the deliverance of man, enslaved by sin, through One whose life had universal value, and from whom all mankind might receive the ethical liberty, which alone could make possible a new and right life.

Out of the incarnation, revealed fully in the atonement, we receive the real manifestation of God as Father. Men came to know God and His love through the incarnate Christ.* The heart of this revelation was God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.† We can find God in His holy love toward men in Christ. The God in Christ is possible because of the Christ in God. This approach to the revelation of what the Father is through the knowledge of the Son is fundamental. It is different from the modern emphasis which finds the unveilment of God merely in the teaching and life of Jesus. It is true that all that Jesus is, teaches and does shows us the Father. But the final, full, and deepest revelation of the Father is found in the suffering, crucified and redeeming Christ. It is hard for us men in our human limitation to realize God as Spirit and as holy Love. But when we begin to follow the Christ and see Him as He lived and died, God comes to us in human life and through human experience. Thus as we know Christ we know the Father.‡ This revelation, however, is not given to satisfy our curiosity, nor to enable us to speculate, but for the ethical purpose of knowing that God is just and yet justifies us sinners through Christ. All spiritual knowledge

* John 3: 16. † II Cor. 5: 19.
‡ John 14: 9.

is no matter of indifference whether we believe or do not believe. Our whole ethical life as a life of real goodness has a moral end and aim. Because it has this direction it is conditioned by our acceptance of the living and holy God revealed in the incarnate, atoning Christ.

CHAPTER X

The New Moral Life

After the deliverance wrought by the incarnate Christ it still remains necessary that the freedom, which has been objectively established, shall become our own in a new, ethical life. The first result of Christ's atonement is a new righteousness, which bestows the forgiveness of sins.* But the problem arises whether forgiveness of sin aids moral life or weakens it. If our wrongs are forgiven will we not easily sin again knowing that forgiveness has been established, and is always readily available? Moral progress seems threatened if trespasses can be forgiven so quickly. Has not the usual conception of the ready forgiveness of sins allowed many Christians to remain in sin? The evil results of sin are minimized through forgiveness.

But these objections do not appreciate the nature of divine forgiveness. Those who assent to them think of the easy manner in which indulgent parents forgive their children. There are moral conditions of forgiveness. If it is rightly sought and properly used it must be preceded by genuine repentance. A change of mind and heart must take place which condemns and is sorry for the wrong that has been done, and the sin that has been committed. Where this change of mind has occurred forgiveness becomes the assurance which the troubled conscience needs. It spurs on to a better life. The result of forgiveness is also a forgiving

* Romans 3: 25.

attitude toward our fellow men if we have rightly received it.* A healing influence goes forth through genuine forgiveness rightly apprehended which overcomes evil through holy and redeeming love.

The forgiveness of sins is part of the free justification of man, which applies the blessings of Christ's redemption accepted in willing trustfulness.† But how can a righteousness bestowed without human effort have a moral value? Can any merit be transferred ethically? Is it possible for me to be just by receiving the righteousness and merit of Christ without any meritorious act of my own? These and similar questions arise when we inquire, whether the bestowal of righteousness and the justification upon the condition of the acceptance of the propitiation of Christ are really serviceable for strengthening our own moral accountability and responsibility. Where men are so readily justified they may use this freely given righteousness as an excuse for moral laxity. The reason for ethical effort seems to be taken away. Men continue to sin, and always rest upon the confident expectation that they are righteous if they but claim to believe in Christ.

But this criticism does not understand real faith in Christ. It is impossible to believe in Jesus without repudiating sin. Faith is not an intellectual assertion, nor an emotional attitude. If it is genuine it is a living, ethical confidence in Christ. But it does not ascribe merit to itself. There is no pride of moral attainment in it, but only the humility without which men have low ideals, and deceive themselves about their moral accomplishments. The honest and sincere knowledge of our own defects and sins, accompanied by true confidence of the will in Christ, inspires us to high moral purpose. The atonement of Christ convinces us of our

* Matt. 18: 23ff. † Romans 3: 22ff.

transgressions, and moves us through the power of saving holy love to advance in our ethical life.

The vital experience of St. Paul is typical of the new moral life that issues from justification by faith. For a long time Paul had been an honest, upright striver for righteousness through the law. He was a sincere legalist. Earnestly and with great zeal he sought to fulfill the divine law. There was none of the superficiality in his effort which often marks the ethical life of men. They believe that a law half-fulfilled, or externally observed according to the letter, is a genuine keeping of the law. Paul was one of those deep, truthful characters, who learn that the highest striving out of human strength to observe the law rightly is a vain effort. The law is holy, just and good.* But Paul found that the tendency to sin overcame him. The law only raised his opposition, and made him react against it. He did not and could not do what he acknowledged and approved of as good. He confesses: "For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do."† This failure to attain what he at his best desired to will convinced Paul of the moral inadequacy of the law as the way of righteousness for unredeemed man. He developed the conception of the righteousness by faith as the true result of Christ's atonement, that sin might be overcome, and a new moral life begun. The ethical motive was the underlying impulse in Paul's struggle to be righteous. What Paul confesses is the outcome of his own religious experience. But he was not merely a religious man, but a character who sought the sufficient solution of the ethical life of genuine righteousness.

The new righteousness of man is not a dead asset, and a treasure to be hidden. It is rather the beginning of a real,

* Romans 7: 12. † Romans 7: 15.

new life. Through it the ethical demand is not an external ideal, and a mere duty imposed from without upon man. Man experiences a new birth.* The life of the divine Spirit arises in him. The constant difficulty with a self-directed and self-assured moralism is that it fails in reaching the highest goal of ethical life. A moral man resting on his own merit is good in a mechanical and formal manner. He overestimates his goodness, and undervalues his shortcomings. No sin is really recognized by him in its actual effect upon moral life. Back of his action are many motives which are essentially selfish. There is great self-deception and ethical blindness where men are not motivated by the new life and law of genuine love. The moral life, however, which has its source in the new birth ascends to heights of ethical progress that cannot be scaled by the best ethical culturist. There are deep valleys in natural moral struggle and effort, and only those reach the mountain-tops whose ethical efforts proceed from the new life. Good fruit is only found on a living, good tree.

The reverse of the new life is the effort of men to keep life good by turning away from evil. Conversion is the active response of men to regeneration. Life in the moral sense cannot remain an unconscious life not controlled by man himself. Along with the beginning of the new life there goes the recognition of man, that he must definitely turn from darkness to light, from evil to good, and from sin to righteousness. A mere passive new birth, unaccompanied and unfollowed by a vital resolution and decision of man for the good, would be unethical. The new life and the turning away from the old life cannot be separated in Christian experience. There has been no new birth where there is no new action of righteousness and no new deed

* John 3: 3ff.

of goodness. Conversion is an active attitude of man, and is a proof and demonstration of the reality of the new life.

But conversion is only the beginning of the new life. When man has begun the new life he must continue in it. The development of conversion is sanctification. While God in Christ may work in us, nevertheless we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.* There can be no easy acceptance of the new life, and of the first resolve in conversion, as if the end had been reached. There is no finished result at the start. If we rest on our oars we begin to drift. Overconfidence brings loss and defeat. There must be the constant fear and dread that unless we advance in every good work we may still lose what has been given us. No final assurance is possible that what has been begun by us will develop of itself without our earnest endeavor. Our growth in goodness is a constant, daily task. The difference between this earnest, moral effort and the ethical struggle of those who have no new life is this, namely, the work of those who are born again and converted has a victorious beginning, a high inspiration, and a great promise; but the striving of those seeking their own righteousness, by their own labor and their own merit, is a movement in a circle. It is true that there are characters who apparently of themselves attain a high average morality. They often live upon the fine inheritance of the Christian ethic. But the best of such men fall far below the virility and the beauty of the life of the genuine saints of God. The latter have a power of love and service not equaled by the moral life of noble characters unmoved by the influence of Christ upon man. It is the Christ-life in the believers that moves them to live at their best, inspired by the fact that He loved them and gave Himself for them.†

* Phil. 2: 12. † Gal. 2: 20.

CHAPTER XI

The Social Realm

The individual ethical development is not possible without the social contacts. Men live not only in the free social companionships but also in the fundamental social forms. One of these is the social realm of religion. What this realm should mean for the moral life is of the greatest importance because we are so largely shaped by our social environment. It cannot remain a matter of indifference whether we accept the customary, religious forms, or whether we search for the ideal that must be believed in order that the religious, social realm may be ethically sound. The great difficulty has always been that most men have accepted the prevalent religious social body, whether it was tribal, national or universal, as a fixed organization. The traditions of the religious social form have frequently not been tested by the moral ideal. In our day despite all criticism the church in its external existence is the main consideration in the many plans for its power and progress. There is a churchmanship which deals with all questions from the angle of the organization. Expediency and diplomacy often rule, and the main interest is the continuance and strengthening of the organization. In many of the schemes for a greater unity of the church the ruling motives are those of greater power, better economic efficiency, and a more imposing organization to control the affairs of the world. The church is treated as a visible body of a purely external social nature. There

must be a return to the ideal to be believed, and then realized in the outer form, if the moral value of the church is to be truly conserved.

The remedy for the depression of the church to externality is a new realization of the meaning and import of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is in its claim and hope a great ideal to be sought before there can be an external, existent reality. Wherever God's will begins to be done on earth as it is in heaven the Kingdom comes. This will is a good and holy will, and therefore thoroughly ethical. It seeks the good of men, and has in mind man's highest temporal and final spiritual and moral development. It looks forward to the ultimate eternal life of true happiness both spiritually and morally. While the Kingdom, as the will of the King to be done by man, is in part individual, its largest aspect is social. It contains every necessary moral perfection. Justice, righteousness, mercy, kindness and love are basic in it. Whatever is true and good, every ideal and virtue are to be found in and through it. Where it exists the family becomes the dwelling-place of fine affection, and a school of virtue for the growing generation. The state is the embodiment of real justice in its broadest construction. All business and trade, all commerce and industry are transformed by it and made just and human. This ideal social life in every sphere, which is the ideal of the Kingdom, is to be brought about through the service of the church. What then are the moral tasks that are before the church?

The church must conceive of itself and lead its adherents to think of it as the invisible communion of saints. The saints are not completed, perfect characters, but those men and women whose lives are continually progressing in the new life of sanctification. The belief in the church as a

moral agency must begin by knowing the new moral life coming from the Spirit, and co-operated in by the will of man. Every other point of departure, and every other conception, lacks the true ethical foundation. The original conception of the church in the New Testament as the company of believers in Christ must be recovered, and it must be made essential if the church is justly to ask that men shall believe in it. But in what way is the fellowship of the saints to be not only an ethical community for and in itself, but also a moral influence and power in the world?

One of the most prevalent and mistaken methods adopted by human impatience in the church is legalism. Although the Christian life in the individual cannot begin without repudiating the pharisaic legalism, nevertheless many churches still seek to justify themselves in their inner life and in their demands upon society through legalism. Legal command and restriction are sought that goodness may be imposed upon men. The end may be right but it is not attainable by the way of the law. Holiness must be lived from an inner urge, and it cannot be commanded. No real moral progress is secured through legalism. Legalism produces reaction that leads to immorality. Freedom is destroyed through command and prohibition, and the very foundations of morality are undermined. To seek goodness through law is to lose at once what you seek. The church today is doing great harm to itself and to society by attempting to make society ethical through the claim that the state shall legislate men into virtue.

The church as a moral agent must use the power and inspiration of the truth to effect new life. This is its first and pre-eminent obligation. The truth proclaimed ought to be vitally spiritual. It may be systematic, and will become so as it is realized in its connection and in its full harmony.

But it is not the systematic balance and the logical consistency which make spiritual truth ethically effective. The religious truth must possess and exhibit moral content. It ought to be presented from the angle of its ethical application and result. But such a presentation is not to deceive itself by making religious truth mere moralism. Moralism lacks the living impulse and the vital urge of right spiritual truth with an ethical outcome. The moralist as little as the dogmatist can serve the moral demand and create true ethical interest. The actual moral life is produced through the appeal of the divine truth of the Christ, of His life and words, His death and resurrection. Such truth vitally presented eventuates in the awakening of conscience and in the furtherance of moral progress.

As ethical advance needs constant guidance and instruction the church cannot be a true moral agent, either through purely intellectual or through merely emotional methods. The will must be reached. Consequently the church ought to realize the necessity of the slow and patient process of vital teaching through which character is built. Both intellect and emotion can be used if directed toward the will. There is at present an educational movement in the church which is in danger of becoming merely a method of the best acquirement of religious knowledge as such. The application of the latest modern methods and terms of education is no guarantee that the result will be ethical in its influence. The problem that must be faced is how to make every part of knowledge morally effective. The true end cannot be reached by moralizing and by indulging in ethical injunctions. The moral power must dwell in the truth itself. The result must be reached vitally and not mechanically. In an age when education overemphasizes psychology and method the truth of Christ must not be made subservient to modern

ways at the loss of moral effectiveness. All that is serviceable can be used but the determining test is always the ethical outcome. The purity of the truth to be taught by the church is measured by its fruit, and consists ultimately in ethical reality.

The church to be believed in must seek in its common work to be the agent of the highest and best service of love. There is great danger that in the practical application of its moral motive the church may become sentimental. It may also place its own external welfare above vital service to its members and to society. Whole spheres of service not formerly known have been introduced into the modern church. Whatever service, however, the church wants to render must have a specific character. It cannot be mere social service conditioned and motivated by economic reasons and demands. There is an externalization in the service of bodily needs which so emphasizes the temporal wants of man that it destroys the moral aspect of life. It is true that there is a legitimate place for the bodily as well as for the spiritual needs of men. But our age has largely restricted itself in its philanthropy to the relief of sickness and poverty. These conditions have not been used for a moral end as they should. The effort to civilize the poor has not rested upon the attempt to moralize them. The service of the church, whether it be directed toward alleviating bodily ills, or toward helping the soul, must in essence be ethical. This is the test which it must meet.

In the institutional church an attempt has been made to provide wholesome amusement and entertainment to offset the wrong influences of amusements of the world. Is the providing of recreation a legitimate duty of the church, or is it only employed to attract people to the church? However we may explain the motive it is debatable whether the

entertainments of the church actually develop an ethical social spirit, and prevent its members from patronizing questionable amusements, or whether souls lose themselves in the work of church entertainment to the degree that they fail in moral advance, and through church amusements have their appetite whetted so that they seek more entertainment outside of the church. There is a very serious moral problem here.

In the church there exist two institutions which are called sacraments. The objection is raised that these institutions have no moral value. They are either purely ceremonial or memorial, or magical and mystical. Men attach a merit to their performance and to the participation in them, and the moral requirements and results are forgotten or neglected. It is true that there may be a mere perfunctory observance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They can be used in accord with ecclesiastical usage and tradition, and remain without moral demand or ethical consequence. How shall this misuse be avoided?

Baptism and Communion ought to be connected vitally with the power of the Word of God as truth. This must give them their character. What they convey is what divine, ethical truth in the Word promises. Their condition and their result ought to be moral. They require belief as morally conditioned before they can be rightly received. They bestow forgiveness of sins as an obligation to a new, good life. Those who are baptized have put on Christ,* and are required to live in daily repentance and in daily renewal in righteousness. The Christians who approach the Lord's Table are to come worthily prepared,† forgiving and repentant, if they are to partake profitably of the Lord's body and blood. They go away with an assurance of peace of

* Gal. 3: 27. † I Cor. 11: 28ff.

conscience, and with the obligation not to dishonor the Christ of whom they have partaken, but to live in Him, and through Him to grow in every virtue and in all possible goodness. Thus the sacraments serve the moral purpose implied in their institution. They cease to be performances and habitual acts, and become an inspiration to a better life, furnishing power for true moral motives and for ethical progress.

CHAPTER XII

The Ultimate Hope

The final test of moral worth in our religious beliefs is the hope which they have of the life to come. It may be painted in various colors of imagination, and its imagery may be rich or somber. But it is not the mystical element that is most important. Still less can the ultimate hope be confined to the affectionate expectation of reunion with our loved ones. Fine as this sentiment is in its humanity, and as a testimony of the way in which lives are fused into a unity of a deep, lasting and genuine love, it cannot be made the foundation of our eternal hope. Christianity at its best has always founded its thought of immortality, and its picture of heaven, upon Christ. What is the meaning of Christ in His moral import for us in the problem of eternal life?

The first emphasis has been placed upon the fact that our eternal future rests upon the holy will of God in the eternal past. With the idea of grace, that conditions our new life, before theological thought, it has asserted that our everlasting happiness is altogether in the predestinating love of the Father, who has chosen us in Christ. While we realize that the basis of our salvation is to be found in divine goodness, we know that we must accept what God offers. There must be obedient faith and trustful confidence. Without this attitude no operation of God upon us is possible with any blessed effect. It is unpsychological and unmoral to base human salvation upon the sovereign power of God so abso-

lutely that we are as clay in a potter's hand. We are not non-willing material saved involuntarily. The election of God, and His predestination of us, must not be conceived of mechanically and energetically as the result of an absolute will. Such a view is destructive of ethical life.

The logical counterpart of an absolute choice by divine sovereignty to eternal goodness has been the rejection of some men from all eternity. This rejection is supposed to be independent of our will and of anything that we may do. It shapes our life with fatal precision in every detail to the destiny of damnation. Our sins are a part of the predetermined process of our earthly existence. We could not be good finally no matter what we willed. This rejection did not take place through eternal prevision or foreknowledge of human self-determined unbelief and wickedness. Men predestined to eternal misery did not believe and live good lives because they could not. They could not have faith because they were not chosen to faith. They belonged to the group of the non-elect. This fatalistic doctrine is thoroughly immoral. The increasing realization of its contradiction to divine, holy love has caused it to be largely abandoned. The strongest objection to it lies not in a weak, sentimental conception of God's love, but in the utterly wrong idea it creates of divine justice. A sane morality has cast aside this immoral idea, and given us a better God, and a real Christ, who actually, and not pretensively, dies to save all men. Those who are not chosen and saved are lost through their own sin and evil. Any other conception no matter what its logicality is unethical. The true Christian conception is moral.

It is far more important to find the content of the ultimate hope. Our ethical life can never reach its highest development in the present world with its hindrances and tempta-

tions. At the best our lives are cut short. An eternal destiny must follow if there is any worth in immortal souls. Too often immortality is stressed as the demand of our intellectual incompleteness, and the endless thirst of the mind for fuller and better knowledge. But our mind as mere mind carries no well-founded promise of future hope with it. The only real promise lies in the claim of our total personality to its fullest right and largest unfoldment. Time is not adequate for all that we may become. There are great thwarted capacities of character in human life. Its eternal destiny must come to it to give it constant progress. While the advance of personality includes every gift and every talent its core is the moral determination. We cannot be confidently ethical unless goodness and righteousness can have their perfect fulfillment. The hope of eternity for the individual is a moral demand.

But there is also a social necessity for the final vindication of the moral order. Christ had it in mind when He portrayed the future of the Kingdom of God. At present it is a field in which tares grow as well as wheat.* It is like unto a fisher's net that catches good and bad fish.† But the harvest will come when the tares will be burned, and the wheat conserved. In the evening the fisherman will select the good fish and throw away the bad ones. Thus the society of mankind will finally pass through a judgment in which goodness receives its reward, and justice is rendered according to the deeds of men. There will be an ultimate justification of righteousness.

The philosopher Kant has only put into philosophic form the teaching of Christ about the final vindication of goodness. He held that the present inequalities of reward and punishment were not in keeping with actual merit. An

* Matt. 13: 24ff. † Matt. 13: 47ff.

eternity was needed, and a moral governor of the universe, to right at last all temporal wrongs. It was Kant's moral sense that led him to value the argument for immortality. He did not give it its full social value because he was an eighteenth century individualist. It is only in the social aspect that the demand for final justice comes to its full worth, even though the individual claims cannot be overlooked. The moral order must be victorious or God would not be righteous and just. If right is right as God is God we cannot escape the belief in ultimate ethical harmony. Thus it is again clear that the strongest foundation for eternal hope is moral, and not mystical or metaphysical.

The final state of man is not reached by a mere passage from time to eternity at the end of things. A judgment takes place, and the judgment is given into the hands of the incarnate Christ, who knows what is in man, and who shall decide according to the standard of holy and just, but also of understanding and sympathetic, love. The moral adjustment does not come about of itself. All moral acts require personalities. The moral order in its essence is nothing but the will of God. It is God in Christ, therefore, who must make the final reparation and pass the last judgment. No impersonal forces bring ultimate justice, and render to every one his rightful due, in the light of the inner motives and decisions of life. The deeds will be judged by the intent of the heart. Not the failure of an act but the wrong direction of the will shall be taken into account. It is the real morality of the character of man, and the attitude of his conscience, which will be determining.

In the great picture of the final judgment found in Matthew 25 Christ reveals the standard according to which men will be judged. It is not the intellectual apprehension of the truth, nor the correctness and logicality of belief,

that will count. What is the final test? It is not cold justice of life, nor outward respectability of conduct that determines the issue. Men are not judged by what they made of themselves: not individual temperance, nor purity, nor modesty, nor humility, nor any like virtue within a man's life are at last decisive. The test is the service of love toward the groups and the individuals in the group represented by the hungry, the sick and the prisoners. The moral demand is the demand for active, helpful love. It is not anything less than the fulfillment of the law which asks for the proof of love. Of course such love only grows out of the acceptance of Christ, but it is unconscious of its merit. The vital morality that determines our ultimate hope is the selfless motive to help others, especially those in distress. The deeds done in such service are mostly very simple and commonplace. No parade is made of them, and no ostentation adheres to them. The fulness of a real character reveals itself, however, through such acts. It is not a deed as a deed, but an act performed out of the ethically highest motive of true, serving love which determines our endless future. It is not service as service, but the service of the love which makes men ethically approved and fit for the ultimate hope and the eternal joy and peace of heaven.

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